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Thos. White (a)
Captain R.N.

NAVAL RESEARCHES;

OR

A CANDID INQUIRY

INTO THE CONDUCT OF

ADMIRALS

BYRON, GRAVES, HOOD, AND RODNEY,

IN THE ACTIONS OFF

GRENADA, CHESAPEAK, St. CHRISTOPHER'S,

AND OF THE

NINTH AND TWELFTH OF APRIL,

1782,

BEING A REFUTATION OF THE PLANS AND STATEMENTS OF MR. CLERK, REAR ADMIRAL EKINS, AND OTHERS;

FOUNDED ON AUTHENTIC DOCUMENTS, OR ACTUAL OBSERVATION.

BY

THOMAS WHITE *(a)*, Esq.
CAPTAIN, R. N.

ILLUSTRATED WITH PLANS OF THE BATTLES.

Palmam qui meruit ferat.

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TO THE RIGHT HONORABLE

VICE-ADMIRAL SIR GEORGE COCKBURN,

G. C. B. M. P. &c. &c.

Sir,

The interest with which all subjects connected with his profession are necessarily regarded by every one who excels in it, encourages me to hope that you will look with a favourable eye on the Observations which I have ventured to lay before you.

The early opportunities I enjoyed of appreciating the zeal and ability which you devoted to Naval Affairs, the complete fulfilment of my anticipations, in the value of your subsequent services, and our common acquaintance with one of the Admirals (LORD HOOD) *whose memory I have endeavoured to rescue from unmerited obloquy, still further embolden me to solicit your permission to introduce these "*RESEARCHES*" to the notice of our brother Officers and the Public, under the sanction of your distinguished name.*

At the same time, it will give me much pleasure to acknowledge the many kindnesses I have received at your hands from the commencement of the long-continued friendship with which you have honoured

Your most obedient
and most devoted Servant,
THOMAS WHITE (a).

Buckfast Abbey, Devon,
November, 1830.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
Dedication	5
Preface	9
Byron's Action off Grenada....	15
List of the Fleet	30
Explanation of the Plate	30
Graves's Action off the Chesapeak....	33
Appendix to ditto	65
List of the Fleets	71
Explanation of the Plate	72
Hood's Actions at St. Christopher's	75
List of the British Fleet	92*
———French Fleet	93*
Rodney's Actions of the 9th and 12th of April, 1782	95
Line of Battle	128
Supplement to Rodney's Actions	131
List of the French fleet under Comte de Grasse....	134
Ditto under Mons. Bougainville	135
Explanation of the four Plates	136

PREFACE.

It cannot but be desirable that every work which professes to afford instruction on a subject so important to a maritime nation as that of Naval Evolutions, should be as little liable, as the nature of such a work will admit, to leave its readers under false impressions with regard to the movements which it undertakes to describe, and which form the basis of its deductions. Looking with this view at the Publication of the late Mr. Clerk, of Eldin, I cannot in the first place, withhold a cordial coincidence with the deservedly general estimation in which it is held, (particularly with respect to the Tactical part of that work) and, from this feeling, I have long been anxious that a work of such high authority should be free from the few errors into which the Author was led most probably from a want of practical experience in the subject on which he treats; but I have of late felt this anxiety increased in consequence of the additional importance attached to those errors, by the wider circulation and the higher

sanction they derive from being incorporated into the more recent work on Naval Battles published by Rear Admiral Ekins.

Having devoted a considerable portion of the leisure which it has been the lot of many a Sailor on shore *to enjoy*, to keeping alive in my own mind an interest in the pursuits of the Profession to which I find the attachment which bound me to it in childhood, still unabated, I am desirous that others also should cherish at least an equal interest in studies of such vital importance to their country; and, with this view, I have endeavoured to divest the generally received opinions on certain Naval Movements, of the intricacies and contradictions which have hitherto enveloped them, and which, if suffered to remain, would tend to disgust the young Naval Student by their perplexing obscurity, and to damp the ardour he might otherwise feel in preparing himself for the momentous duties of his profession.

In the pursuit of this object it has been an additional source of gratification, to discover, as I proceeded, stronger grounds for assuming that the names of several of our Naval Commanders had been treated with much greater severity than they deserved, and that many of the operations of our Navy, which the violence of party spirit, or the obliquity of opposing interests, had represented in an unfavorable light, required only the persevering industry of calm and impartial research, to place

them in a point of view in which they may still be regarded with pride and gratitude.

I trust that the pretensions thus advanced will not be considered presumptuous when I add, that the documents on which they are grounded are of a nature widely different from those of which either of the above named writers availed himself. While the plans given by Mr. Clerk are derived merely from his own conception of the Movements as described by the Admirals engaged, and while Rear Admiral Ekins has adopted the plans thus originating with Mr. Clerk, the data on which I have principally founded my Remarks on these movements are partly the result of my own personal observations, matured by reflection and experience, and partly the Plans and Statements drawn by Captain Matthews on the spot, and immediately recorded after the Engagements.

Trusting that these sources of information will give to the following observations a claim to a degree of authenticity to which the before mentioned works cannot aspire, I have only to request that the indulgence of my readers may be extended to the *style* in which those observations are conveyed. Having entered the Navy before I had completed my eleventh year, I may perhaps be excused if I should appear to have devoted more attention to the *facts* I relate than to the *manner* in which they are related: I will at least endeavour to be as perspicuous as the nature of my undertaking will allow, and nothing

shall induce me intentionally to *distort* or *misrepresent* any transaction which may be narrated in the following pages. Having no wish but to arrange the facts I may be enabled to collect, and to make what I trust will form useful deductions from them, I need scarcely disclaim the slightest feeling of disrespect whenever I find myself under the necessity of differing from the writers who have already steered the course which I am about to pursue.

ADMIRAL BYRON'S ACTION,

OFF GRENADA.

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Before I enter upon the details of this engagement, I would state a few circumstances connected with the early proceedings of the squadron, which may have biassed the public mind in forming an opinion upon the merits of its Admiral, who, though undeserving of censure, was so unhappy as to have the effects of the visitations of Providence attributed to his want or skill in his profession, or to a want of energy in his character.

Previous to any declaration of war, or even any avowed intention of hostility on the part of France towards this country, a squadron of twelve sail of the line, and some frigates, had been equipped for service at the port of Toulon, with that degree of secrecy which usually characterized the operations of the then French government; and notwithstanding his Majesty's ministers had received intelligence that such an armament was in course of preparation, and although they must have been aware of the object of its equipment, yet they were so infatuated, that no measures were pursued to counteract, or anticipate, those insidious attempts of France in aid of the cause of rebellion in that quarter of the globe, except to send a frigate to cruize at the entrance of the Strait of Gibraltar, to ascertain when the hostile squadron might pass through, and to endeavour to discover its probable destination.

Captain Sutton of the Proserpine, who was entrusted with this important mission, descried the French squadron on the 16th of May, and, as soon as he could form a conjecture of its course, he returned to England with the intelligence, and arrived in Plymouth Sound on the 5th of June.

It was afterwards ascertained that this squadron had left Toulon on the 12*th of April*, 1778,* under the command of that distinquished officer the the Comte d' Estaing.

Admiral Byron left Plymouth Sound on the 9th of June, with twelve ships of the line, a frigate, and a sloop of war, with orders to proceed to North America, the supposed destination of Mons. d' Estaing.

Admiral Byron unfortunately attempted to prosecute his passage on a western, instead of pursuing a more southern course, which *experience* has since shown to be the safest and the most expeditious. In consequence of this, four and twenty days were expended in making a hundred and twenty leagues, at the expiration of which time, he encountered a tremendous gale of wind, which dispersed his squadron. The Admiral was left to prosecute the voyage alone in the Princess Royal, while some of his ships were obliged to return to England, and the remainder reached such ports in North America as their shattered condition would allow them to make.

If Admiral Byron had been ordered to proceed to Gibraltar early in the month of May, instead of waiting in Plymouth Sound for the return of the Proserpine, much benefit might have resulted from it; and possibly many of the disasters which this squadron experienced might have been avoided. At all events Lord Howe's gallant little squadron, had it been reinforced in time, as it might, had the above arrangement been adopted, would have been

* It is somewhat singular that on that day four years the French Navy sustained a defeat from which they never recovered during the war.

able to have acted on the offensive, and to have rendered ineffectual the co-operation of the French squadron with their new allies the Americans—if it had not led to its defeat, or capture. But it was not to be, and Admiral Byron never collected more than ten out of the thirteen ships of the line which sailed with him from England: nor did he effect his junction with them until the 26th of September.

After his arrival in the West Indies from North America, he often tried to bring the French squadron to action, but without success, owing to their superiority in sailing. Admiral Byron had therefore no fair opportunity of removing the general prejudice entertained against him.

While he was escorting the homeward bound trade to a certain latitude, the French took the opportunity to capture the Island of St. Vincent. This they effected with only four small vessels and four hundred troops; owing to the culpable negligence of the Governor, and the military commanding officers, who had taken no step whatever to put the island in a state of defence.

When Admiral Byron returned to St. Lucia from the northward he found that the above occurrence had taken place during his absence. He accordingly concerted measures with General Grant to attempt the re-capture of the island.

During his absence Mons. de la Motte Piquet with seven sail of the line had, on the 27th of June, arrived at Martinique. Owing to some extraordinary oversight, the arrival of this squadron was not communicated to the Admiral on his return. Previous to sailing on his intended expedition, he sent a small vessel to reconnoitre Fort Royal harbour, Martinique. The officer on his return reported, that he saw there thirteen large ships, which he supposed to be ships of war; that he was confirmed in this opinion, by observing, that one of the ships carried a flag at the foretop-mast-head; and that he was prevented from reconnoitring them so close as he intended, by a fri-

gate and some small craft being sent in chase of him. This intelligence deceived Admiral Byron very much, by leading him to conjecture, that M. d'Estaing had not been joined by his expected re-inforcements from Europe. In the afternoon of the 4th of July, the Admiral received information from St. Vincent, that on the 1st instant, a French fleet of more than thirty ships of war* had passed by that island; and that it was reported, that M. de la Motte Piquet had joined M. d'Estaing about a week before that time. In consequence of this intelligence, the fleet bore up for the Island of Grenada. On the 5th he was joined by two schooners from Grenada. By the accounts which they gave, the invasion of the island was put beyond a doubt; but as to the strength of the enemy's fleet, their reports were very contradictory.*

Stedman in his history of the American war, when speaking of these vessels having met Admiral Byron, says, "Two vessels which had made their escape, after the arrival of the Count d'Estaing at Grenada, met the British fleet; and from the intelligence brought by them, the Admiral was led to believe that the naval force at Grenada, under the Count d'Estaing, *was inferior to his own.*†

The above circumstances are important, as they enable the reader to form a more correct judgment of the proceedings of Admiral Byron in the action about to be narrated.

It will now perhaps be a proper opportunity to lay before the reader what Mr. Clerk's opinion was with respect to Admiral Byron's mode of conducting his fleet on that

* The French force amounted to thirty-five ships of war on the day of the engagement.

* Beatson's Memoirs, vol. 4, p. 464, 465.

† Stedman's History of the War, vol. 2. p. 96. All these circumstances are not only kept out of sight by the author of "Naval Battles Critically Reviewed and Illustrated," but in addition thereto, those parts of Admiral Byron's Letter which make any reference to them are carefully expunged from his extract of it.

occasion. "The similarity," says Mr. Clerk, "of this battle with that of Mr. Byng, already described, *is so great* that, whether *the mode* in which *the British made the attack*, or the mode in which the French avoided it, shall be considered, *we have no doubt of showing*, that *the circumstances in either case are equally effected* by the principles laid down (section iv.); &c. &c." Nor may it be improper, at the same time to present the reader with Rear Admiral Ekins's opinion of it, couched in the form of an "Observation," viz.: "With an *inferiority of force* (21 to 26 or 27 ships of the line) *it was certainly indiscreet* in the British Admiral, to attempt to bring on a general action *by endeavouring to stop the van of the enemy*."

We will now endeavour to discover how far these *reflections* on the conduct of Admiral Byron can with *justice be maintained*.

Early on the morning of the 6th, Vice Admiral Byron with a fleet of twenty-one ships of the line,* and a convoy of transports, arrived off the N.W. part of the Island of Grenada, in order to attempt its relief. At 4 A.M. the Enemy's look-out frigates announced the approach of the British fleet.

At day-light Admiral Byron perceiving that the Enemy's ships were getting under way, made the signal for a General Chase in the S.W. quarter, as their outer ships bore at that time about S. by W. from the Princess Royal. Soon after, the signal was made for the fleet to form into line a-head, for their mutual support, according to their respective rate of sailing. In consequence of the French fleet being in a cluster, while attempting to get out of the bay,

* One of them, the Medway, carrying 60 guns, was only 1204 tons, and was twenty-four years old.

Admiral Byron conceived that their force did not exceed fourteen or fifteen ships of the line. The signal was then made for the Suffolk and Vigilant to quit the convoy, leaving it in charge of the Monmouth. Rear Admiral Rowley, with the above ships, had been ordered to stay by the transports for the purpose of superintending the landing of the troops, unless otherwise directed by signal.

At six o'clock the signal was made for the ships to engage as they could get up, without attending to the established order of battle. The British were then running down in *column*, steering about S. by W., with the wind at E.N.E., or on the *Larboard Quarter*. Upon the breeze reaching the French fleet their ships endeavoured to draw out into line as fast as possible; the van ships laying up north, or along the land, with the starboard tacks on board.

When the breeze had enabled the enemy's fleet to draw out into line, Admiral Byron was convinced that he had been misinformed with respect to their number and force, by the masters of the two vessels he had spoken on the previous day: for he then discovered that they had twenty-six or twenty-seven sail of two-decked ships. "*However,*" says the Admiral, in his public letter, "I determined to make the attack." And in this resolution he was probably strengthened, by having observed, as he ran along the land, that the French flag was flying at every signal station upon the Island; he therefore had no alternative but to risk the chances of a battle.

Before he made the above discovery, Admiral Byron appears to have had a double object in view; if he saw the British flag still flying at St. George's, he was pursuing the course that would have led him to that place; should it be in the possession of the enemy, the course he steered would lead him down upon the rear of their fleet; so that he was prepared to adopt either measure, according to circumstances.

As the two fleets were thus obliquely approaching each other, from opposite directions, the weathermost of the enemy's advanced ships fired at the British van; no doubt with the hope of drawing them off from their evidently intended attack upon their *rear*, which was yet unformed. But the gallant Barrington was not to be allured or intimidated from steadily pursuing his purpose, and continued to steer towards their sternmost ships: nor did he deign to return their fire, until he had got sufficiently near to them, which he accomplished at half past seven, A. M. when he opened his fire on their centre and rear in crossing.

At eight o'clock, the Sultan, the leading ship, had passed the sternmost ship of the enemy, and wore round under her stern; this compelled the French ship to bear up also to avoid being raked. In consequence of this, the Sultan was carried so far to leeward that she lost the proud station of leading the fleet, an honor which now devolved on the Prince of Wales, Vice Admiral Barrington, who wore round, and gradually hauled to the wind on the starboard tack, to follow up the enemy. Admiral Byron then made the signal for the fleet to ware in succession and to chase N.W.;* then for eight of the headmost ships to form into line for their mutual support, without attending to the prescribed order of battle, and to engage close.

While the van was thus waring and forming astern of Vice Admiral Barrington, the sternmost ships that were coming up, under Rear Admiral Hyde Parker, were engaged with the enemy while crossing each other from op-

* The only compass signals of that day were limited to four, viz. the N E, N W, S.E., and S.W. quarters; therefore, although the signal was made to chase in the N.W. quarter, it was not meant thereby that the fleet was to steer N.W. Mr. Clerk from not having understood the full import of this signal, very naturally fell into the error he did respecting it—this misconception led to the erroneous theory which he attempted to establish respecting this engagement: this ought to have been known *to all Naval Officers* of any standing in the service.

posite directions. Among these ships the Cornwall and Lion, from being nearer to the enemy than those about them, (for the rear division had not then *formed into line)* drew upon themselves almost the whole of the enemy's fire. In this attack, says Captain Matthews, the above ships were much disabled, as was the Grafton, which was a-head of them but equally near to the enemy in crossing.

In order to confirm what I have before advanced—that Admiral Byron began the action by an attack upon the enemy's *rear,*—and *not their van,* as was supposed by Mr. Clerk, which supposition has been adopted by Rear Admiral Ekins, I shall present the reader with the following extract from Matthews's account of the engagement taken at the time. "By eight, the British van had passed the rear of the enemy, and immediately veered after them, raking them with such effect, that two of the enemy's line of battle ships bore away before the wind.* The rear continued closely engaged with the enemy till about half past eight, the whole having then passed, the signal was made to veer and chase to the N.W and for seven of the headmost ships to draw into line. In this attack the Cornwall, Grafton, and Lion were much disabled, particularly the latter.† At nine the signal was made to engage as close as possible.

Rear Admiral Rowley from having been attached to the convoy of transports, until called in by signal, was among the sternmost ships, endeavouring to get into his station; but on perceiving his gallant friend Vice Admiral Barrington advancing towards him at the head of the British line,

* These ships I apprehend were driven from their position by the Sultan, and Albion, which were the two leading ships, as they formed a-stern of the Prince of Wales, when that ship hauled to the wind on the starboard tack.

† Captain Matthews did not specify the position of the above three ships, in his account of the engagement, because his second plate points out their exact situation, as well as that of every individual ship; except those of the Suffolk, Vigilant, and Monmouth, which had not then joined, which plate will be given herewith.

and closely engaged with the enemy, he waited his nearer approach, when he wore round without signal, and placed himself a-head of the Prince of Wales, then, as well as the ships a-stern of her, under a crowd of sail to get up with the van of the enemy.

In this situation the Suffolk continued until she got a-breast of the fourth ship in the enemy's line (from the van) when they by making sail, prevented her getting up with their leading ship. This gave their unoccupied ships an opportunity of firing occasionally at her.

The British van thus advancing, afforded some relief to the Cornwall and Lion, by passing between them and their opponents, and took up a station a-stern of Admiral Byron the moment that they found an opening to enable them to do so. The precise place in the line which those ships then took, I have not been able to discover, but it must have been a-stern of the Commander in Chief, *and not a-head of him*, as represented in Mr. Clerk's plates of this action.

The whole of the rear division wore in succession, and took a station as they could get up, in the wake of the Commander in Chief; forming a north and south line, and *not* a N.W. and S.E. as it is represented to have done in the plates published by Mr. Clerk and Rear Admiral Ekins.

About ten o'clock the Fame, Cornwall, Grafton, and Lion, were so completely cut to pieces. that they were obliged to quit the line and drop a-stern in order to repair their damages; yet Admiral Byron persevered in his attack, although he then had only seventeen to twenty-six or twenty-seven ships of the enemy.

This having been observed by Captain Fanshawe, and that the British Van was closely engaged with and opposed to superior numbers, he, in the most gallant manner, bore down to the support of the former without signal, and placed the Monmouth, the ship he commanded, a-head of the Suffolk, Rear-Admiral Rowley, and a-breast

of the *third* ship of the enemy's line. This gallant proceeding Admiral Byron in his official letter, unfortunately describes as having been done for the purpose of *stopping the van of the enemy*, (a favorite expression of the day) which never could have been Captain Fanshawe's intention, as he placed the Monmouth, as before remarked, a-breast of the third ship in the French line,* and not in the French leading ship's line of course,—the only mode of stopping a ship.

The action was continued until one P. M., notwithstanding the disparity of force, when the French van bore up and crowded sail away.† An anonymous commentator, who frequently appears behind the scenes in the work entitled "Naval Battles," very sarcastically says on this, that "*with British intrepidity it might have ended* gloriously;"‡ but unfortunately the gallant, and no doubt experienced commentator, forgot to subjoin the plan *he* would have adopted, in a similar situation, to have achieved so brilliant and so hazardous an exploit. To be sure he lays down some common place axioms for the conduct of a fleet, but they do not happen to apply to the case now under consideration.

Notwithstanding the injury the enemy's ships sustained was not so apparent as that experienced by the British, yet their great loss of men could not have occurred without some of their ships having received material damage: for according to the lowest estimate that could be obtained of their killed and wounded, the former were said to

* This part of Admiral Byron's letter appears to have entirely misled Mr. Clerk in his view of this battle.

† Matthews, page 6.

‡ In the account given by Rear Admiral Ekins of the gallant defence made by Admiral Barrington at St. Lucia, against almost double his force, the same commentator, at least I should, by his *style*, presume him to be the same individual, says, "While the British deserve every credit for their skill and gallantry, I cannot but think the failure of the attack was owing more to the *lack* of both on the part of the enemy." This appears a strange way of paying a compliment to British valour, and to British nautical skill.

amount to *one thousand two hundred,* and the latter to *one thousand five hundred*;* while in our fleet, only one hundred and eighty-three were killed, and three hundred and forty-six wounded. In one of the French ships, the captain, and five lieutenants, were killed.†

Having thus I trust shown that Admiral Byron conducted his fleet into action in a manner wholly different from that which is generally reported, and having thus justified the manœuvres he was under the necessity of adopting, I would *en passant,* advert to the method by which the misrepresentations relative to this engagement have been attempted to be supported. Had the whole of the Admiral's letter been allowed to appear in the work of Rear Admiral Ekins, the battle would have worn a very different appearance; but then it would have overturned the System of Tactics of which the gallant author and his *Magnus Apollo,* Mr. Clerk, appear to be so fond. It is right however that Admiral Byron should be permitted to speak fully for himself, not only to vindicate his conduct in the engagement under consideration, but also with a view of pointing out the injury likely to be inflicted by such curtailments on the Service in general.

In order to place the subject fairly before the reader, I will subjoin those parts of Admiral Byron's public letter which have been so unceremoniously abridged, distinguishing those passages which Rear Admiral Ekins has omitted, by printing them between brackets thus [ ].

EXTRACTS, WITH OBSERVATIONS THEREON.

"The signal was made for a General Chace [*in that quarter,*‡*—as well as for Rear Admiral Rowley to leave the convoy ;*] AND [*as not more than fourteen or fifteen of the enemy's ships appeared to be of the Line, from the position*

* Beatson's Memoirs, vol. iv. *p.* 469. † Ibid.

‡ The *S. W.* quarter doubtless.

they were in, the signal was made] to form and engage as they could get up."*

The enemy appearing not to exceed, at that time, fourteen or fifteen ships of the line, I cannot but think that the signals to chase, to form as convenient, and to engage as the ships could get up with the enemy, were decidedly the most judicious that could have been made, under the above circumstances; even if it had been the Commander-in-chief's intention to attack the enemy's van—which it was *not;*—but which both Mr. Clerk and Rear Admiral Ekins seem determined to maintain as an incontrovertible fact,† or else, why was the above passage rejected by the latter writer?

EXTRACT.

"But the enemy getting the breeze [*of wind about that time,*‡] drew out their line [*from the cluster they were in,*] by bearing away and forming to leeward on the starboard tack, [*which shewed their strength to be very different from our Grenada intelligence;*§ *for*] it was plainly discovered they had thirty-four ships of war, [*twenty-six or twenty-seven of which were of the Line, and many of these appeared of great force.* HOWEVER] the general chase was continued, and the signal was made for close engagement; [*but our utmost efforts could not effect that;*] the enemy in-

* Clerk's Tactics.

† See the first "Observation" in page 78 of "Naval Battles."

‡ The time alluded to was when the weather ships of the enemy's fleet began to fire at the *Sultan, Prince of Wales,* and *Boyne;* the *Three Ships* that *led into action.*

§ This intelligence, as before described, was communicated by the two schooners that escaped from Grenada on the approach of the French fleet; which intelligence at the time they left the island might have been correct, as the vessel sent to reconnoitre Fort Royal Bay, Martinique, on the 1st or 2nd of July, reported to Admiral Byron that thirteen large ships were seen there, with a flag at the fore on board one of them; no doubt to deceive. These ships might have been De la Motte Piquet's squadron, who had only arrived there three days before D'Estaing sailed for Grenada, and might have remained for a day or two after.

dustriously avoided it, by always bearing up when our ships got near them; [*and I was sorry to observe, that their superiority over us in sailing, gave them the option of distance, which they availed themselves of, so as to prevent our rear from ever getting into action.*"*]

As the importance or non-importance of the omitted passages given above speak for themselves, they stand in need of no observation to strengthen their claim to the reader's attention, except to notice the gallant, though proscribed "*however.*"

EXTRACT.

"The ships that suffered most were the ships the action began with,† [AND] the *Grafton,* Capt. Collingwood, *Cornwall,* Capt. Edwards, and *Lion,* Capt Cornwallis. The spirited example of Vice Admiral Barrington [*with the former Three*] exposed them to a severe fire in making the attack; [*and the latter three happening to be to leeward, sustained the fire of the enemy's whole line, as it passed on the starboard tack.*"‡]

As some of my readers may not have it in their power to refer to the work entitled "Naval Battles," &c. I shall take the liberty of transcribing the above extract as it is given by Rear Admiral Ekins, to enable them to form a comparison.

"The ships that suffered most were those the action began with; the ships of Captains Collingwood, Edwards, and Cornwallis: the spirited example of Admiral Barrington exposed them to a severe fire in making the attack."§

How could that be the case when Captain Colling-

* Clerk's Tactics.

† Viz. the Sultan, Prince of Wales, and Boyne. By the omission of the conjunction—AND,—the laurels these ships acquired are transferred to the Grafton, Cornwall, and Lion.

‡ Clerk's Tactics.

§ "Naval Battles," &c. &c. &c.

wood's ship was next to the Princess Royal in the centre, and Captains Edwards and Cornwallis were in the rear with Rear Admiral Parker? That these ships sustained injury in making the morning attack is very certain, but from very different causes than those assigned by the above extract; unless it were possible for them to be in the van, centre, and rear at the same moment of time.

Mr. Clerk speaking of this action says, "the ships in the van were exposed, for a *long time*, to a heavy fire, they *could* not return."

Admiral Barrington could have immediately returned the fire of the enemy, but as it would have been throwing away powder and ball, he very wisely delayed doing so for *ten* or *twelve* minutes, when having got closer, he opened a destructive fire on the French centre,* and a still more destructive one on their rear, his line of march taking him very close to them. How long Mr. Clerk's "*long time*" lasted, he has not condescended ro inform his reader. Had the attack been in the manner he supposed it to have been, doubtless a "*long time*" would have elapsed ere Admiral Barrington could have returned the enemy's fire.

Had Admiral Byron, as Mr. Clerk represents him to have done, chased N.W. in order to bring on the engagement, when the French fleet were first seen, he would have been running away from, instead of advancing towards the enemy.

As Mr. Clerk's remaining observations on this action, are founded on the erroneous idea that Admiral Byron brought on the engagement by making an attack on the enemy's van, when he in fact began it by assailing the enemy's rear, it would be a waste of time to attempt to refute arguments grounded on such false data. I cannot

* *Forty minutes only* elapsed between the time of the French *beginning to fire*, at the greatest possible distance a shot would go, and the Sultan passing close a-stern of the last ship in their line,—during thirty of which the British van were closely engaged while *crossing*.

however but remark, that he has shown so much ingenuity in the erection of a superstructure on so sandy a foundation, that none but those who have the opportunity to obtain better information than fell to his lot to be furnished with, could doubt of its authenticity, or question its correctness.

With respect to the mode of attack proposed by the author of Naval Battles, and so eulogized by an anonymous commentator, it is only necessary to observe that, as the two fleets *were never* situated, relatively to each other, as by them supposed,—no refutation is necessary, nor need any comment be offered on it except to say, that had Admiral Byron attempted such a manœuvre, D'Estaing was, no doubt, too well versed in tactics not to have known how to take advantage of such a movement.* Indeed, had the gallant author and his friend been aware of the *actual situation* of the two fleets, they, doubtless, would never have hazarded such a proposition, as the one in question, as the attack would have been made on the enemy's fleet formed *en enchelon*, or, like a crescent, bending to leeward from the centre to the rear, instead of being in a straight line as by them supposed, and as exhibited in the plate given in that work.

Whenever any mode of attack is suggested, a plan of ulterior proceedings should accompany it, in order that the pupil may know how to recover his ground in time, should the supposed enemy attempt to counteract the intended movement. Any general may be able to lead an army on to battle, but a *good one* is required to know how to extricate it out of a difficulty, or to secure its retreat if necessary.

* The mode of attack proposed was, to assail with the 12 sternmost ships, 17 or 18 of the enemy.

That the public may be acquainted with the names of those officers whose actions merit the gratitude of their country, I shall, though it be not very usual in the present day, beg leave to subjoin the following list of the fleet engaged.

	Ships.	*Guns.*	*Captains.*	*Admirals.*
1	Suffolk,	74,	H. E. Christian,	Rear Admiral Rowley.
2	Boyne,	70,	Herbert Sawyer,	
3	Royal Oak,	74,	Thomas Fitzherbert,	
4	Prince of Wales,	74,	B. Hill,	Hon. S. Barrington, Vice-
5	Magnificent,	74,	J. Elphinstone,	Admiral.
6	Trident,	64,	A. J. T. Molloy,	
7	Medway,	60,	Wm. Affleck,	
8	Fame	74,	J. Butchart,	
9	Nonsuch,	64,	W. Griffith,	
10	Sultan,	74,	A. Gardner,	
11	Princess Royal,	90,	W. Blair,	Hon. J. Byron, Com-
12	Albion,	74,	J. Bowyer,	mander-in-Chief.
13	Sterling Castle,	64,	R. Carkett,	
14	Elizabeth,	74,	Wm. Truscott,	
15	Yarmouth,	64,	N. Bateman,	
16	Lion,	64,	Hon. Wm. Cornwallis,	
17	Vigilant,	64,	Sir Digby Dent,	
18	Conqueror,	74,	H. Harmood,	Rear Adml. Hyde Parker.
19	Cornwall,	74,	Tim Edwards,	
20	Monmouth,	64,	R. Fanshawe	
21	Grafton,	74,	Thomas Collingwood	

EXPLANATION OF THE PLATE GIVEN HEREWITH.

The number against each ship in the Plate will give her name by referring to the above List.

B The British fleet

F The French ditto.

g French store-ship left at anchor.

The Fleets were situated, as shewn in the Plate, at 15 minutes past 7 A.M.

Engd by G.Cooper

Stonehouse

Engd by G Cooper

Stonehouse

ADMIRAL GRAVES'S ACTION,

OFF THE CHESAPEAK.

AN ACCOUNT

OF THE

ACTION OFF THE CHESAPEAK,

BETWEEN

REAR ADMIRAL GRAVES AND THE COMTE DE GRASSE,

TOGETHER WITH ALL THE CIRCUMSTANCES CONNECTED WITH THIS AFFAIR.

HAVING observed that the Engagement between Admiral Graves and the Comte de Grasse, off the Chesapeak, has been represented differently by different writers, I have been induced to devote some attention to the subject, and being in possession of information now known but to a few individuals, I trust I shall be enabled to bring before the public a detailed statement of facts, as they really occurred, calculated at one and the same time to set the affair in its proper light, to rescue the distinguished naval characters who were present from unmerited obloquy, and to furnish a supply of facts for the information of those whose pursuits are directed to the study of Naval Tactics. I have found myself more especially called upon of late to undertake an investigation into the particulars of this engagement, from the circumstance of its having been adverted to by a recent professional writer, who has undertaken to enlighten the nautical world with an illustration of *this*, among other naval actions fought during our late wars, in which the most serious charges are brought against

the conduct of *one*, if not both of the English Admirals engaged. No man who feels interested in the character deservedly acquired by the Navy of this country can remain passive while he sees it suffering under the infliction of a series of unfounded allegations, tending at once to cloud the fair lustre of its former fame, and to obstruct the path which may lead to its future glory.

The two charges which I am anxious to investigate are, the one of dilatoriness in obeying the signals of his commanding officer, and of not bearing down to engage the enemy, brought against Sir Samuel Hood, and the other of Admiral Graves having omitted to exert himself as much as he might have done in aid of Lord Cornwallis's army. But in the course of this investigation it will be my object not only to disprove the allegations under which the memory of those commanders is suffering, but to give such a minute and detailed account of the movements of the hostile fleets on the station in question, as will elucidate several confused and contradictory statements in the work of Rear Admiral Ekins, and will furnish the young naval student with the means of acquiring correct and distinct views of operations which the above work has involved in considerable obscurity.

It is necessary to premise that the whole naval force in North America under Admiral (afterwards Lord) Graves, even when reinforced by the squadron under Sir Samuel Hood, consisting of 14 sail, did not exceed twenty-one ships of the line; of which number, the Robust was unfit for service, and the Prudent incapacitated for a time, in consequence of the injury they had sustained in a previous engagement, while acting with Admiral Arbuthnot, the late Commander-in-chief on the station.

On the 31st of August, Admiral Graves with five sail of the line and a 50 gun ship, stood out from Sandy-Hook, and joined the squadron under Sir Samuel Hood, then getting under way without the Bar. Admiral Graves being

the senior officer, assumed the command of the united squadrons, consisting of nineteen sail of the line, and a 50 gun ship, besides several frigates. With these Admiral Graves directed his course for the Chesapeak, whither he had been taught to expect that the Comte de Grasse would bend his course, with such ships as he could bring with him from the West Indies; but which it was supposed, if not inferior, would certainly *not be superior* to the fleet now under his command; consequently, if he could attack Monsieur de Grasse before he could form a junction with the Rhode Island squadron, under Monsieur de Barras, consisting of eight ships of the line, besides several frigates, there was every probability of his being able to accomplish something, which might frustrate the plan of operations contemplated by the Franco-American sea and land forces, for the expulsion of the British troops from the southern states of that nascent Republic.

Previous to quitting Sandy-Hook, Admiral Graves had obtained intelligence (as will be shown hereafter) of the French squadron having left Rhode Island under Mons. de Barras, for the presumed purpose of joining de Grasse in the Chesapeak. This of course increased the British Admiral's anxiety to engage one or other of the enemy's squadrons before they could form a junction—facts, which many Historians almost pass over unnoticed. These circumstances of course precluded the British Admiral from *digesting any decided plan of operations* until he could ascertain whether De Grasse was yet arrived in the Chesapeak, and *if he were, what force he had brought with him,* and how he had disposed of it. Until he could obtain information on these important points, the line of proceeding must naturally be contingent and uncertain. Yet *writers* frequently imagine that *plans* involving consequences of the highest importance to a state, can be considered, matured, and executed, by officers in command, in, perhaps, less time than *they themselves* might require to decide

upon the performance of *the most trivial occurrences of life.*

I shall now take the liberty of laying before the reader a copy of all the important parts of Admiral Graves's letter as given by that *candid* and *judicious,* although, occasionally, misinformed writer, Clerk of Eldin, as it contains many passages necessary, it appears to me, to give a clearer view of this affair, than the mutilated letter given by Rear Admiral Ekins. To the intelligent reader the probable causes which induced the exclusion of these passages will be obvious, when he compares them with the reasonings hereafter to be submitted for his consideration. The omitted passages will be comprised within brackets thus [ ].

"Extract of a Letter from Rear Admiral Graves to Philip Stevens, Esq. dated off Sandy-Hook, 31st August, 1781.*

"I beg you will be pleased to acquaint my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, that the moment the wind served to carry the ships over the bar, which was buoyed for the purpose, the squadron came out; and Sir Samuel Hood getting under sail at the same time, the fleet proceeded together, on the 31st of August, to the southward.

[" *The cruisers which I had placed before the Delaware could give no certain information, and the cruisers off the Chesapeak had not joined.*]

"The wind being rather favourable, we approached the Chesapeak the morning of the 5th of September, when the advanced ship" (the Solebay) "made the signal for a fleet. We soon discovered a number of great ships at anchor [*which seemed to be*†] extended across the entrance of the

* There must be an error in the date of this letter, as it describes events that occurred subsequent thereto.

† By omitting this passage, Admiral Graves's public letter is made to

Chesapeak,* from Cape Henry to the middle ground. [They had a frigate cruizing off the Cape, which stood in and joined them; and,] as we approached, the whole fleet got under sail, and stretched out to sea, with the wind at N.N.E.† As we drew nearer, I formed the line first a-head, and then in such a manner as to bring his Majesty's fleet nearly parallel to the line of approach of the enemy; and when I found that our van was advanced as far as the shoal of the middle ground would admit of, I wore the fleet, and brought them upon the same tack with the enemy [and nearly parallel to them, though we were by no means extended with their rear.‡] So soon as I judged that our van would be able to operate, I made the signal to bear away§ and approach, and soon after to engage the enemy close. Somewhat after four, the action began *among* the headmost ships,‖ pretty close, and soon

correspond with the erroneous position of the French fleet, as it is represented in a plate given by Rear Admiral Ekins, copied from Clerk's *work on Naval Tactics.*

* Instead of the French fleet occupying the space between Cape Henry and the middle ground, as erroneously imagined by superficial writers on this subject, who have never taken the trouble to look further than this unexplanatory, unchronological letter for the ground work of their several hypotheses on this affair, De Grasse had actually anchored as close as he could, with safety, to the watering place in Lynn-haven Bay; but, on approaching to that place in the oblique direction we did, the French fleet *might seem* to be so situated; and it was so qualified in Admiral Graves's *original letter.*

† The Solebay discovered the French fleet at half past 9; Admiral Graves saw them from the London's, whether mast-head or deck is not specified, at anchor at 11; and the French fleet did not get under way until noon. See the French account.

‡ Why was this passage omitted in the work alluded to?

§ It is to be regretted that the public letter should not have more particularly specified whether this signal was addressed to the whole fleet, or to the van ship only, for the benefit of writers on naval matters, who may not be able to obtain any other information, than that which the public Letter affords them: the fact is that the signal was *addressed to the Van exclusively;* which the passage implies, though not expressed with accuracy.

‖ This is the first instance of the Official Letter specifying the date of any occurrence, although six hours and a half had elapsed since the signal was made by the look-out ship for discovering the enemy's fleet. Consequently

became general, as far as the second ship from the centre, towards the rear. The van of the enemy bore away, to enable the centre to support them,* or they would have been cut up

"The action did not entirely cease till a little after sunset [though at a considerable distance; for,] the centre of the enemy continued to bear up as it advanced; and at that moment seemed to have little more in view than to shelter their own van as it went away before the wind.†

"His Majesty's fleet consisted of nineteen sail of the line; that of the French formed twenty-four sail in their line. [*After night, I sent the frigates to the van and rear, to push forward the line,‡ and keep it extended with the enemy,* with a full intention to renew the engagement in the morning; but when the frigate Fortunée *returned from the van,* I was informed that several of the ships had suffered so much, that they were in no condition to renew the action until they had secured their masts: we, however, kept well extended with the enemy all night.]

["We continued all day, the 6th, in sight of each other, repairing our damages. Rear Admiral Drake shifted his flag into the Alcide, until the Princessa had got up another main-top mast. The Shrewsbury, whose captain lost a leg, and had the first lieutenant killed, was obliged to reef

the reader can form but a very imperfect idea of the various operations performed; while the historian is frequently led into error; and the critic into a labyrinth; where he alike bewilders himself and his readers from the want of attention to time.

* The French account, which, I believe, was tolerably correct, states—that the French van bore away, by signal, from De Grasse, *it being too far to windward* to *form a good line* with the centre and rear.

† Had this paragraph been transposed by Admiral Graves, it would have made it more intelligible.

‡ This portion of Admiral Graves's Letter, appears to have been thrown overboard by the gallant historian, lest it might seem to contradict the Pamphlet on which his account of this battle is founded. To "*push forward the line*" conveys a very different meaning from the *supposed* order "to fight closer," as asserted in that pamphlet.

both top-masts, shifted her top-sail yards, and had sustained very great damage. I ordered Captain Colpoys of the Orpheus to take command of her, and put her into a state for action.]

["The Intrepid had both top-sail yards shot down, her top-masts in great danger of falling, and her lower masts and yards very much damaged, her captain (Molloy) having behaved with the greatest gallantry to cover the Shrewsbury. The Montague was in great danger of losing her masts; the Terrible so leaky as to keep all her pumps going; and the Ajax also very leaky.*]

["In the present state of the fleet, and being five sail of the line less in number than the enemy, and they having advanced very much in the wind upon us during the day, I determined to tack after eight, to prevent being drawn too far from the Chesapeak, and to stand to the northward."]

I shall now take a hasty view of the operations, and force of the fleet under the command of Monsieur de Grasse.

On the 30th of August, the French Admiral in Lynnhaven Bay,—not with fourteen sail of the line, as had been anticipated by his Majesty's government at home, and by Sir George B. Rodney, the late Commander-in-chief on the Leeward Island station;—but with twenty-eight,† and several frigates. On the day of his arrival, he captured the Loyalist sloop,‡ and compelled the Guadaloupe to

* These suppressed passages will contribute to substantiate what will be advanced hereafter with respect to the policy of Monsieur de Grasse keeping his fleet at long shot distance, for the reasons that will be then given. Those persons who have only read Rear Admiral Ekins's Historical Illustrations of this battle, would naturally conclude it to have been little more than a sham fight, (which in the rear it certainly was) as no account is given of its results.

† So stated by Stedman in his History of the American War: but I believe with only twenty-seven, and a fifty gun ship.

‡ If the Loyalist sloop and Guadaloupe frigate had been cruizing as they were ordered, instead of being at anchor, Sir Samuel Hood might have fallen in with them, as it was expected he would; Admiral Graves would have been informed of the strength of De Grasse's fleet; and they might have escaped capture.

seek refuge up the York River, with Lord Cornwallis's army, then only *eight days established at York Town,* which he had to fortify in the best manner he could, and *where he was ordered to remain until reinforced from Sir Henry's Clinton's army* at New York; which will be adverted to in its proper place. The Comte brought with him three thousand troops under Brigadier General St. Simon, to reinforce La Fayette's corps, and ultimately to join in the intended operations contemplated by General Washington against the Earl of Cornwallis's little army, pent up in a place so situated, that it could only be succoured by a preponderating naval and military force.*

De Grasse, immediately, sent three ships of the line up the Chesapeak for the purpose of blocking up the York River, where, a small British naval force was acting with Lord Cornwallis; and a fifty gun ship, and some frigates, *up the James River to cut off his Lordship's retreat,* should he attempt to escape into North Carolina.

The Compte also sent the boats of his fleet on shore at Lynn-haven to procure and complete the water his ships stood in need of, preparatory to his proceeding through the Channel formed by the shoals of the middle-ground and the Horse-shoe, at the upper entrance of which he intended to moor his fleet, so as to preclude the British from molesting the operations of the combined armies, the moment Monsieur de Barras should arrive with his squadron, consisting of eight ships of the line, and four frigates from Rhode Island, then hourly expected. These judicious plans were, however, for a time, delayed, by the appearance, on the 5th of September, of Admiral Graves with *nineteen* sail of the line, whose fleet was seen by Monsieur

* When St. Simond's corps joined that of La Fayette's, the two together must have equalled Lord Cornwallis's army; whose operations were of necessity confined to the erection of temporary works round York Town; which it required every arm to effect before Washington came up with his main body, then on its way to Philadelphia.

de Grasse's look out frigates cruizing in the offing, at about half past 9 A. M., directing its course for the shoal of the Middle-ground.

At first it was supposed by de Grasse, that the squadron indicated by the look out frigates, was that of Monsieur de Barras; but a very short time convinced him of his mistake, and that it was the British fleet. The boats were immediately recalled, and preparations made to weigh, *as soon as the ebb-tide* would enable them to work out of the Bay; without which they would not have effected it.*

In the mean time, the fleet, under Admiral Graves, was approaching under fore-sails, top-sails, and top-gallant sails, with a fresh breeze at N.N.E., and steering about a S.W. course. At 10 o'clock A. M., Admiral Graves made the signal to prepare for action; and at 11 o'clock, for the line of battle a-head, and *for Sir Samuel Hood's division to lead.* At 1 P. M. the signal was made to form *on an East and West line;* soon after, for *Rear Admiral Drake's division to make more sail;* and at 2, for the fleet to wear together,† and to bring to on the larboard tack.

At *noon, the tide making out,* the French fleet began to weigh, the outermost ships first.‡ Some of the headmost ships were not obliged to make more than one board, while the innermost ships were compelled to make several tacks, ere they could weather Cape Henry;§ the whole forming into line, as fast as they could, after they attained to, and stretched out from, the southern part of the Middle-ground; from which they could weather the above-named cape. Before two o'clock, the rear had got clear of the Horse-

* This circumstance is never alluded to, either by Rear Admiral Ekins in his historical account of this affair, or by the writer in the Political Magazine, quoted by him.

† Beason's Memoirs.

‡ See French account of this action, published at Cape Francois.

§ Had the French fleet been at anchor, as represented in the plates of this action given by Rear Admiral Ekins, they would have had no difficulty in getting out.

shoe sand, and were tolerably well formed on the south side of the Middle-ground, and, as well as the van, and centre, was standing out of the Bay.

At half-past 2 P. M. Admiral Graves made the signal for the fleet to fill, the French van having then got nearly abreast of the British. The two fleets were, at that time, almost parallel to each other, and nearly on an east and west line—but at least three miles asunder. The Admiral then made the signal for the van to fill and bear away two points; and shortly after, for the rear to fill. The signal to keep more away was afterwards repeated once or twice;* but at each time it was addressed to the *van ship*, and the rest were of course to follow in her train. At half-past three the signal was made for the ships to close to *one* cable's length asunder; *and for the rear division* (then Sir Samuel Hood's) *to make more sail;* and soon after for the *leading ship* to keep more to starboard.

Every officer who has served much in the line of battle during war, must be aware, when the signal for closing the line is made, that, the signal for the stern-most ships to make more sail may be addressed to the rear division or its commander, by the commander-in-chief, without his intending to convey the slightest censure, either to the admiral, or the captains serving in that division.

Had the signal in question been often repeated—a fact not exactly stated—but strongly implied in Rear Admiral Ekins's account of this affair—then that division, and its Commander, would have merited the implied censure.

At 4 o'clock, the headmost ships in Rear Admiral Drake's division began to engage the van of the enemy, under Monsieur de Bougainville, whose division, at first, was a little separated from the French centre and rear.

* In that day it was necessary to repeat that signal for every additional point, that the ship it was addressed to was to haul to starboard or to port. It is of importance that this be kept in mind; our improved signals not making it now necessary to do so from having compass-signals.

De Grasse, aware that the projected operations in North America depended mainly on the efficiency of the fleet under his command, and not from any unworthy, or dishonourable motive, made the signal for his van to bear away and take up a fresh position more to leeward, where they placed themselves at long shot distance; upon which Admiral Graves repeated the signal for the British van "to haul more to starboard," *i. e.* bear away. This gave their adversary the opportunity of directing their fire coolly and deliberately at them, as they were again in the act of running down to renew the combat.

Soon after this, some ships immediately a-head of Admiral Graves, thinking themselves to be near enough to the enemy, hauled up, from the lasking course the fleet was sailing on, in order to engage.*

This of course caused some delay and confusion among the ships *a-head of the London,* but I can take upon myself to assert, that *no such confusion was experienced among the rear division,* as is asserted by the author of "Naval Battles."

From the circumstance of the van having kept away at different periods, from two to four points, the British fleet became ranged in a south east and north west line, instead of an east and west one, as it was at two o'clock. This will account for the circumstance of only twelve of the headmost ships having had an opportunity to fire upon the enemy, as well as for the exclusion of the remaining seven, which consequently were too distant from the French rear to fire with effect.

Although the signal for close action was flying at the same time with that for the line on board the London, yet, Sir Samuel Hood conceived it to be his duty, not to comply with the former, since he could not do so without vio-

* A similar circumstance occurred to the unfortunate Admiral Byng, and was one of the principal causes of the catastrophe which ensued to the fleet, and to himself.

lating the latter. But the moment that the latter signal was hauled down, which it was at half-past 5 P. M. on board the London, Sir Samuel Hood made the signal for his division to bear up, and steer for the enemy's rear, which, as well as ours, had not been engaged. The leading ship of this division not complying with the signal, he hailed the Monarch, his second a-head, and ordered her captain to "*lead him down within point-blank shot of the enemy;*" which order was most joyfully complied with by all on board the two ships, who longed "to be at them;" but their sails were scarcely trimmed, when *the signal for the line was re-hoisted on board the London,* to the great mortification of every one on board. These ships' signals, (the Barfleur and Monarch) were also made to *re-take their stations in the line.* When the Monarch *hauled to the wind* in obedience to these signals from the Commander-in-Chief, she was compelled to throw all aback in order to *avoid the shot fired over her,* by her leader, *which had not quitted the line.**

From Admiral Graves having caused his fleet *to bear away in succession, van ship first,* instead of ordering the whole fleet to *bear away together,* the two lines from being parallel to each other, *as was the case at two o'clock,* ultimately formed an angle of at least thirty degrees. Consequently, when the van ships of the respective fleets were within musket shot of each other, the two rear ships were not within reach of cannon ball. Therefore, if Admiral Graves thought proper to conduct his fleet into action in the way he did, there can be no just grounds for throwing blame on the Second in Command, as is done in the following passage in Rear Adml. Ekins's work on Naval Battles, which states, that—"It was not until half-past 5 o'clock, when the rear division (Sir Samuel Hood's) bore down into action. At 40 minutes past 3, P. M. the line was

* The Monarch's log will testify to the above fact.

closed to one cable asunder; and it appears that much difficulty was experienced by Admiral Graves in getting some of his ships to keep their stations, and great *dilatoriness* on the part of the *rear division* in *obeying his signals* and *closing with the enemy.*"

Now I should be glad to know where Rear Adml. Ekins obtained the information on which he has founded this grave accusation against Sir Samuel Hood and his gallant division. He surely would not have given publicity to assertions so injurious to the professional character of one of the first officers in our naval service, on the bare authority of an ephemeral pamphlet,* which was published after the action, in vindication of the conduct of the Commander-in-Chief, without substantiating them by evidence derived from a purer source, and of less suspicious authority.

Did that writer ever consult the London's log lodged in the Navy Office? will that log, or the log of any other individual ship in the fleet, confirm the statement thus published to the world? If they do, I shall be induced to fancy, that what I that day saw and heard, was a mere chimera of the brain, and, that what I believed to be the signal for the line, was not a union jack,† but an *ignis fatuus* conjured up to mock me.

I shall now proceed to investigate the latter part of the before-quoted paragraph from Rear Admiral Ekins's work; which, had the order of time been observed in its construction, would have commenced instead of concluding the passage alluded to. "*It appears that much difficulty was experienced by the Admiral in getting some of his ships to*

* It would have been a happy circumstance if this ill-judged pamphlet had never seen the light, as it has greatly contributed to mislead naval writers, cast a shade over the fame of one Admiral, without exculpating or removing the blame which evil report had affixed to the other.

† That flag at the mizen peak was the signal for the line, at that time; it was uniformly kept flying while the line was to be preserved: nor was it hauled down from 2 P. M., until the action was over, except for about the space of ten minutes; at half-past 5 P M., the period alluded to.

keep their stations, and great dilatoriness on the part of the rear division in obeying his signals and closing with the enemy."

Now as this tirade commences with, and is closed by, animadversions on the rear division, the reader cannot but conclude, that the whole of the passage is intended to be applied to that division, without a single proof being adduced on which to ground the offensive charge. Had Rear Admiral Ekins remembered what happened in Byng's action, and had he been better informed of the occurrences which took place in this, he would have known that "the difficulty experienced by the Admiral in getting some of his ships to keep their stations," was precisely the same in both; and that instead of its occurring among the rear division, it arose from two or three of the ships *a-head* of the Admiral hauling up to fire at the enemy, before they were near enough,* instead of steering upon the lasking or diagonal course prescribed by him, as that by which the enemy were to be approached. Why, then, should the unfortunate rear division, by implication even, be involved in the errors of that part of the fleet, over which Sir Samuel Hood had *no control?*

As for the charge of "*dilatoriness,*" I shall merely observe, that *the rear division was close to, and in perfect line with, the centre division,* and all the ships from the Commander-in-chief to the *sternmost* ship of the rear division, were so near to each other (after the signal was made to close to one cable's length) that the jib-boom of each was over the tafrail of her leader;—and if this manifests *dilatoriness,* then I admit, the rear division deserved the censure so inconsiderately heaped upon it.

I would now ask, what signal or signals were disobeyed, or even delayed in the execution, for a single moment, by Sir Samuel Hood or his division on that day?

* I could designate the precise ships; but respect for the dead—who no doubt meant well—restrains my pen.

Was that division to be stigmatized because it could not obey *two opposite signals at once*—that for the *line*, and that for close action,—when the two lines formed an acute angle of thirty degrees, instead of being parallel to each other? The answer must be very *evident* to those, who, from *experience*, understand the management of a fleet.

I shall now proceed to the last part of the charge, with respect to the order of time, although in the author's mode of arranging the sentence, it stands at the head and front of it; viz:—"*It was not until half-past* 5 *when the rear division (Sir Samuel Hood's) bore down into action.*"

This mis-statement first appeared, where it might naturally be expected to find place, in an *ex-parte* pamphlet, published with the express purpose of removing popular odium from one individual by saddling with it his second in command, whose shoulders were probably thought broad enough to sustain the weight, but who occupies too elevated a station in the Temple of Fame, to be affected by it. But it is astonishing that it should have been transcribed, after a lapse of 42 years, unsupported as it is by a shadow of proof, into a work professedly written to criticise and illustrate naval actions, more especially when the author could have found unexceptionable authorities for his statements in the log-books of the fleet, which are deposited and preserved in the Navy Office.

From the above mis-statement, any uninformed person would naturally conclude, that Sir Samuel Hood had perversely remained to windward, and would not, *however ordered by signal to do so, come down to the aid and assistance of the van and centre divisions* partially engaged with the enemy. This, however, no one who had served in that fleet, would have been hardy enough to assert: and had Sir Samuel Hood so conducted himself he would have deserved to have been shot.

Now the simple fact, which gave a *colour* to the above mis-statement, was this. At half-past 5, Admiral Graves

hauled down the signal for the line as before intimated, and kept the signal flying for close action. The road to glory then became plain and easy; nor did Sir Samuel Hood lose a moment in availing himself of the opportunity thus afforded him of doing his duty to his king and country; for he instantly made the signal for his division, *then in close order* and *right astern of the Admiral, to bear up out of the line,* and steer *right down upon the enemy,* then at random shot distance. The Monarch, commanded by the gallant Reynolds (afterwards Lord Ducie,) and the Barfleur, Sir Samuel Hood's ship, had scarcely trimmed their sails for running before the wind, *when the signal for the line was re-hoisted on board the London,* and, *for these ships to re-take their stations which they had but just quitted* for the express purpose of closing with the enemy.

This might have appeared like confusion in the Rear Division, to the Admiral's Secretary or Flag Lieutenant on board the London, for to both the honor of furnishing these "Minutes" is attributed, on which the afore-mentioned pamphlet was founded.

From what has been said on this subject, I think the reader will be induced to come to the conclusion that Sir Samuel Hood acted correctly in continuing, as he did, *in the Line of Battle prescribed by his Senior Officer,* notwithstanding the signal for close action was flying with that for the line of battle a-head. For, when Sir Samuel Hood did bear up to engage the enemy, in conformity with the former signal, when that for the *line a-head* was hauled down on board the London, his signal was immediately made *to re-take his station* in the line: and lest that might be misunderstood, the signal for the line of battle a-head, was re-hoisted at the same time, although the signal for close action was flying. Was Sir Samuel Hood to obey the signals thus addressed to him, to return into the line; or was he, in *defiance of them,* to rush down and engage the enemy, when expressly ordered to the contrary by signal from his commanding officer?

No experienced officer will hesitate for an instant what answer to give, who sets a just estimate on the value and importance of strict discipline, and implicit obedience. To these, under Divine Providence, we owe all our naval triumphs, and when they are once undermined, we may bid adieu to victory.

Having, I hope, rescued from obloquy the professional character of that deservedly celebrated officer Sir Samuel Hood, whose cool, intrepid conduct and strong nerve I had frequent opportunities of witnessing in the moment of danger, I shall now endeavour to show that the censures so liberally heaped on Admiral Graves, by the Political Magazine quoted by Rear Adml. Ekins, for not succouring, as it was termed, Lord Cornwallis's army, were as unjust, and as unmerited as those calumnies with which his second in command was assailed by the pamphlet before alluded to. The want of correct information led the authors of both these publications to draw the erroneous conclusions which have misled the public respecting this affair.

That the Commander-in-Chief's mode of conducting his fleet into battle was a bad one, none I think will attempt to dispute—but it was agreeable to the tactics of the day; and Admiral Graves had a very difficult card to play.

Admiral Graves had not only a very superior force to contend with on the 5th of September, but there were eight ships of the line that De Grasse expected to swell his numbers with, coming from Rhode Island; besides the three which he had left to block up the York River, and which he could call to his assistance whenever he desired it:—all of them powerful and efficient ships, which was not the case with the British fleet.

Besides, on that fleet, inferior as it was, depended the fate of America. And he had not only a more powerful, but a more wary foe to contend with, who from the superior sailing of his ships, had the means of either closing with,

or withdrawing from his adversary, as he judged most expedient.

Instead of running direct for the Chesapeak, it is much to be regretted that Admiral Graves did not attempt to intercept the Rhode Island squadron, which he knew had left that place, previous to his sailing from Sandy-hook, in order to join the Comte de Grasse at the Chesapeak. Even had he failed in intercepting it, nothing worse could have happened than did occur—that of rendering his fleet useless for upwards of five weeks, which valuable time was lost in attempting to repair and make it fit for service, when too late to be useful.

But had he succeeded in falling in with it, the advantages that might have resulted therefrom, would have been incalculable; and four days of perseverance might have crowned the effort with success; as Barras anchored on the 9th in Lynn-haven Bay. The only precaution to have been taken would have been to have kept De Grasse in ignorance of his being on the coast, by sinking every vessel he fell in with, and by keeping just out of sight of land.

A plan of attack on Rhode Island had been proposed by Sir Henry Clinton to Admiral Graves and Sir Samuel Hood, for the express purpose of obaining possession of that squadron; but which plan was put a stop to, by their learning, while deliberating upon it, that Monsieur de Barras had left that place on the 25th of August. The measure proposed would have been advantageous either way. Had Admiral Graves succeeded in capturing that squadron, it would have greatly paralyzed the efforts of the besieging army, if it would not have prevented its operations altogether; it would have put the two fleets nearly on an equality in point of numbers, and would have arrested the progress of the French arms for the ensuing year in the West Indies; and might, possibly, have created such a spirit of discord between the French and Americans, as would have sunk the latter into the lowest depths of de-

spair; from which they were only extricated by the arrival of the forces with De Grasse.

Besides, had not Providence crowned the endeavour with success, and had Monsieur de Barras passed the British fleet unobserved, yet this good would have resulted from it—that Admiral Graves, after the enemy's fleet had been thus augmented to 35 sail of the line (including the three at the mouth of the York River), would have deemed it expedient to have avoided a battle with such a preponderating force as sixteen sail superior to his own; by which we should have saved the Terrible, (burnt in consequence of her being rendered incapable of service in the action), and have prevented the injury which the other six disabled ships sustained in the action, without any beneficial result, which it took more than a *month to repair and again render fit for service.* The Admiral would, also, have been ready to have returned to the charge with an encreased force, (two more ships having arrived from the West Indies, and and three from England) which, with the 7,000 troops, (sent too late) might have enabled him, had he not been so long detained in refitting his disabled ships, to have anchored his fleet in Hampton Roads; where, with the aid of the above troops, provided they could have arrived before Washington came up with his whole force, he might have been enabled to have extricated Lord Cornwallis's army from its *injudicious* and *perilous situation,* even in the face of such a superior naval force if it were anchored above the Horse-shoe and Middle-ground: a position which the French fleet took up, the moment it returned to the Chesapeak, after the engagement.

Had the action been avoided, as I presume it ought to have been, there would have been twenty days for carrying the above operations into effect; in which time they could have been accomplished, had not the action occurred, and had not Sir Henry Clinton engaged in the extraordinary expedition against New London.

Thus we perceive that many adverse circumstances, unfortunately, concurred to prevent the adoption of measures, which, perhaps, no skill or foresight on the part of Admiral Graves could have surmounted or averted,* and over which he had no control; indeed, a short reference to the circumstances of the times will convince us, that he could scarcely even consider himself permitted to exercise his discretion on the point of fighting or avoiding the enemy. An *ordinary mind* can be little aware of the firmness which it requires to enable a commanding officer to set public opinion at defiance, and, regardless of any other object, to keep steadily in view, under critical circumstances, the conscientious discharge of his duty to his king and country. However coolly we, at this distance of time, may balance in our minds the propriety or impropriety of the course of operations in question, it is well known, that the coffee-house politicians of the day were clamorous, because nineteen indifferent ships did not capture or destroy twenty-four of the finest ships (every circumstance considered) that ever left a French port.

Suppose Admiral Graves had proceeded after the battle with his six disabled ships to the mouth of the York River, as suggested by the writer in the "Political Magazine," quoted with so much confidence by Rear Admiral Ekins, could he "*there*" have procured the means of refitting them? I venture to affirm that he could not have obtained the most trifling supply either of spars, cordage, or any other article requisite to refit his fleet, and put it into a fit state again to face the enemy: besides, how could his expected reinforcements have joined him "*there*?"

Considering then, with candour, all the circumstances of the case, I cannot but conclude, that after the action nothing more could have been done than was done by

* For instance, how could Admiral Graves have prevented the capture of the Guadaloupe and Loyalist, which had been ordered by him to cruize off the Chesapeak to give him information of De Grasse's arrival and force?

Admiral Graves and the fleet under his command. In a word, there was a want of judgment and judicious co-operation in a quarter, *where blame has not attached*—in order, as it were, that a double portion might be accumulated on Admiral Graves—or Admiral any-one who served in the fleet which for a time was under his orders.

If the same display of energy had been exhibited in removing, succouring, or reinforcing Lord Cornwallis's army in August, that was used in the preceding March to assist the brave Arnold's little force then threatened with destruction, the unhappy fate of the former might have been averted; and that unfortunate war might have terminated under more favorable auspices.

Admiral Graves's intention in going to the Chesapeak was to ascertain the force and discover the intentions of the enemy; and if possible to attack De Grasse before he was reinforced by the Rhode Island squadron; or to attack the latter should he fall in with it; and—not to succour or withdraw Lord Cornwallis's army, as erroneously imagined by the writer in the "Political Magazine."

In order to substantiate what I have above hinted at, it will be necessary to take a succinct review of the military operations in Virginia from the previous December, when that excellent, and enterprising officer, Brigadier General Arnold was sent there, with 1650 men, for the purpose of creating a diversion in favour of the British army in South Carolina; and for other military purposes, which it is not my intention to enter upon, except as far as they may be connected with the subjects on which I am about to treat.

His first object, after his arrival in Virginia, was to select a fit spot to fortify and establish as a place of arms; and as Portsmouth appeared to possess many advantages,*

* See its advantageous position in the accompanying map, both as a place of defence, as well as for relief from naval co-operation.

he decided upon fortifying it, for that purpose. The facility with which he was subsequently reinforced there, when expected to be attacked, proved it to have been the place above all others, in that vast expanse of waters, for an army to occupy, that might occasionally require the aid of a fleet, to support, or withdraw it.

Its neighbourhood to Lynn-haven Bay gave great facilities to any communication with that anchorage; its situation on the Elizabeth River ensured a communication with any naval force that might occupy Hampton Roads, situated at the mouth of the James River, at a distance not exceeding five miles; while the entrance to one or other of these Roadsteads might have been accessible to a sustaining naval force, an advantage which York-town did not possess; as the passage through which you must approach it, is easily shut up by a superior naval force of the enemy against any fleet wishing to proceed to or return from it.

Washington, being particularly anxious to put a stop to the depredations committed by Arnold's active little force, an object which, after he had fortified Portsmouth, he felt himself at liberty to attempt, earnestly solicited Monsieur d' Estouches, the French naval officer, then commanding on that station, to embark some French troops on board the squadron under his command, and proceed with them to the Chesapeak, for the express purpose of annihilating Arnold's army, and destroying the small British squadron acting with him.

These solicitations were at length complied with on the part of the French commanding officer, and Monsieur d' Estouches, having embarked some troops, left Rhode Island on the 8th of March, 1781, with seven sail of the line, one 44-gun ship (the Romulus) of two decks, and some frigates, and proceeded therewith for the Chesapeak.

Admiral Arbuthnot having been informed of the sailing of the above squadron, by Sir Henry Clinton, and that the Chesapeak was in all probability the place of its desti-

nation, immediately proceeded to sea from Gardner's Bay, in Long-Island, in order to intercept the enemy's squadron, and frustrate their purpose, if possible, of establishing themselves in Virginia.

Although he sailed two days later than the enemy, yet, by dint of carrying sail, he arrived off the Cape of Virginia before him. His squadron consisted of seven line of battle ships (one of which was a three-decker) and a fifty-gun ship; so that the *British had then rather the superiority of force,* if not of numbers; the reverse of which was the case with Admiral Graves. The two fleets were fought in the old-fashioned way—that is, the British went down on a diagonal line, or in a lasking direction, and the French avoided close action; consequently the usual results were produced—their disabling the ships in the British van, and these killing the men in that of the French: this action afterwards deprived Admiral Graves of the services of the Robust and Prudent, from want of means to refit them at New York.

Monsieur d' Estouche, not being apparently very hearty in the cause of his good allies, returned to Rhode Island, instead of proceeding to his destination; and Admiral Arbuthnot went to Lynn-haven Bay,(it being then a friendly port, from its vicinity to Arnold's force) to refit his shattered ships, and to cover such reinforcements as he expected would be sent to General Arnold.

Upon this occasion, Sir Henry Clinton acted with vigour and promptitude, by sending *two thousand troops,* under Major General Philips, to reinforce Arnold's army; and under such convoy as the senior naval officer at New York could furnish him with. They happily escaped the French squadron, and arrived safe, while the British squadron was lying in Lynn-haven Bay.* From this place the General

* This may account for Admiral Graves subsequently wishing to remain as long as he could off the Chesapeak, to cover any reinforcements that might be sent toLord Cornwallis's army.

marched his troops, and joined General Arnold the same day, at Portsmouth. This affair greatly mortified General Washington.

Had the same measures been resorted to before Admiral Graves left Sandy Hook, it would have been *his fault* if Cornwallis's army had not been relieved or, at least, if something had not been attempted in his favour, by Admiral Graves.

Soon after these occurrences, Lord Cornwallis thought proper to quit South Carolina, and march into Virginia, where he formed a junction with the above force at Petersburgh, situated on the south side of the James River.

This step, which was highly approved of by his Majesty's ministers, unfortunately *gave umbrage to the Commander-in-Chief at New York, who did not approve of his Lordship's having done so, or indeed of any of his subsequent movements;* and yet would not prescribe for him any positive line of proceeding, until he came to the fatal decision of cooping up this gallant army within *the neck of land,** where they could not defend themselves, and from whence they had no retreat.

One day, troops were sent to augment this army, the next, they were recalled, and when embarked, were again countermanded; so that what between doing and undoing, marching and counter-marching, it could begin nothing in earnest, either offensively, or defensively, *until the 22nd day of August,* when it became finally established at York Town,—a place totally unfortified, where they were to entrench themselves, and act on the defensive, until the Commander-in-Chief judged *the moment to be arrived for carrying on,* what he termed, *"solid operations."* To establish the army in this sickly, untenable place, *Lord Corn-*

* Sir Henry Clinton so designated it; but as it is ten miles wide in every part, it derived no additional strength from that circumstance. Had York been built on a promontory and united to the main by a narrow neck of land, there might have then been some good reason for selecting it.

wallis was ordered to abandon and totally evacuate Portsmouth, which *was fortified;* and from whence, had he been allowed to use his own discretion, he might have retreated into South Carolina the moment he found that no immediate succour could be reasonably expected in time after the encounter between the two fleets, and the junction of the two squadrons under the Comte de Grasse.

By retreating before Washington could bring up his whole force, he would have completely frustrated all the enemy's plans, and the aid of this vast fleet would have been rendered useless, for that season at least: nor did the French admiral show himself so hearty in the republican cause, as to have gone much out of his way to serve them.

That York Town did not afford protection to shipping, the event too plainly showed, yet it was for this purpose that this ineligible place was selected by Sir Henry Clinton.* Had he possessed more local knowledge, or had he trusted more to the judgment of Lord Cornwallis, who had the means of personally appreciating its value, one may venture to believe, that York Town would not have been selected for this army to have acted on the defensive in, against an enemy possessing four times its force, and with an immense fleet to cover the operations of Washington's army.

Lord Cornwallis had not concentrated his whole force at York, consisting of 5000 men, more than eight days, when the Comte de Grasse arrived in Lyn-haven Bay with twenty-seven sail of the line, one fifty-gun ship, and several frigates; having 3000 troops on board, under the command of Mons. de St. Simon, on the 30th of August. The Glorieux, Vailliant, and Triton, of the Line, and two

* The Charon 44, the Guadaloupe frigate, and the Vulcan fire ship, were on the 10th day of the siege burnt by red hot shot from the enemy's batteries, and most of the transports were sunk in this "*strong position*," recommended by the "Political Magazine."

frigates, were immediately sent up through the passage between the Horse-shoe sand and the Middle-ground, to anchor before, and block up the York River; and the Experiment of 50 guns, L' Andromaché of 32 guns, together with several smaller vessels, were also sent up the James River, to cover the disembarkation of the French troops under Monsieur de St. Simon; and to *effectually cut off the retreat of the British army to the southward.* Thus we perceive, at the very commencement of the enemy's operations, the folly of having selected York Town as the place whereon our army was to await that succour, which did not quit the British head quarters, at New York, until *the very day* it was compelled to surrender.

Need any more be said to convince even the most sceptical, that Portsmouth was the place which that ill-fated army ought (as was intended by his Lordship) to have occupied, and not York Town?* Indeed to such an extreme degree was this army neglected, that on the day of its surrender, the military chest was reduced to the paltry sum of £1800.—a sum considered to be so contemptible by the French Commissioners, appointed to see the capitulation executed, that they would not condescend to notice it, until urged to do so by their more sordid allies:† consequently Lord Cornwallis did not possess the means of obtaining, for want of money, the necessary information, either of Washington's approach, or of La Fayette's movements;—and whatever aid Admiral Graves might have been enabled to have afforded his Lordship, I think it may be assumed as a fact, that he was not furnished with *a single dollar* to supply the unpardonable deficiency: yet in most of the accounts hitherto published of this affair, writers have most unblushingly asserted, or obscurely

* Lord Cornwallis had actually left this "neck of land" and marched to Portsmouth, when he was ordered to retrace his steps, and return to York Town.

† See Gordon's history of that war.

hinted, that the loss of this little gallant army was attributable to Admiral Graves, or the fleet under his command; without being able to advance a single fact in proof of their loose assertions, which are generally founded in error, prejudice, or misconception; and without possessing local knowledge, professional skill, or even common information, of the subjects on which they presume to write.*

It will now be necessary to take a hasty view of the proceedings at New York, the seat of our military authorities at that period.

General Washington, or the American Fabius, as he was justly denominated, was not quite certain at the commencement of the campaign, where the naval and military forces of his most Christian Majesty would be directed to carry on their operations; or, if he were acquainted with this secret, he possessed the happy art of retaining it. But be that as it may, in order to deceive the British General, or to have his troops at hand, should New York prove the object of their joint attack, Washington concentrated the allied forces at White Plains, making occasional demonstrations of attacking the British out posts; but which proved to have been only feints, to confirm Sir Henry Clinton in the fatal delusion that New York was the object of these manœuvres. This farce was continued to be enacted until the middle of August, when the American General received dispatches from the Comte de Grasse, informing him that it was his intention to be ready to act with him in the Chesapeak, whither he was bending his course, and where he might be expected about the latter end of August. If any doubt respecting the scene of action did exist in Washington's mind, of which I am very sceptical, it was now removed, and he accordingly threw off the mask, by decamping from White Plains, and con-

* Admiral Graves recommended Point Comfort—not York Town, to be taken possession of by Lord Cornwallis's army.

ducting his army over the North River, and marching upon Philadelphia. Just about this time, the 11th of August, 2500 troops, besides recruits for the different regiments, arrived at New York, from England.

To any one not acquainted with the complicated science of military tactics, the obvious mode of proceeding would have been to have immediately detached these and such other as could be spared, in order to have sent them with Admiral Graves, to reinforce Lord Cornwallis's army, then about to entrench itself at York Town in Virginia; but other views dictated a very different mode of proceeding, as will be hereafter shewn.

When Sir Samuel Hood arrived off Sandy-hook, he went on board the London, to communicate with Admiral Graves on their future operations. These officers were met by Sir Henry Clinton, who had come down from New York to the Hook, to propose a conjoint expedition against Rhode Island, in order to take possession of that place, *and capture the French squadron lying there.* This measure would have created a *real diversion* in favour of Lord Cornwallis's army, had it been projected in time, and would no doubt have brought back Washington with his whole force, and might have disconcerted all his measures for that campaign; but while these officers were deliberating, news arrived that Barras had left that place on the 25th, consequently the project fell to the ground. But so enthusiastically* attached was this General to *diversions*, that he was still resolved to make one, though on a smaller scale, but still in the opposite direction to that in which Washington was marching, and on much less important objects than the destruction of a French squadron. *This expedition* was directed against *New London,* and consisted of 5000 troops, who sailed thither in transports *five days*

* As might be shewn upon another occasion of the same vital importance with his affair.

after the British fleet had left Sandy-hook, without a soldier on board, either *to reinforce* or *succour the* apparently forgotten *army at York Town.*

I have already given an account of the action between the two fleets and its results, and shall therefore not say any more on that subject, except to observe, that if Sir Henry Clinton had embarked the above 5000 men on board the fleet, previous to its leaving Sandy-hook to proceed off the Chesapeak, in order to reinforce Lord Cornwallis's army, instead of going in the direction it did, and had Admiral Graves failed in putting into execution the General's requisition to land them, then indeed Admiral Graves might have merited the censures so unsparingly heaped upon him, by those who appear to have been very ill informed of the subject in question.

It appears that it was not until after the sailing of Admiral Graves's fleet, and about the return of the above-named expedition, that a council of war was convened at New York by the military Commander-in-Chief, *in order to deliberate on the measures necessary to be taken for the relief of Lord Cornwallis's army.* It resolved, "That 5000 troops should be embarked on board the King's ships,* in order *to proceed to the assistance of Lord Cornwallis:* and on the *supposition that the French were masters of the Chesapeak, it was judged expedient that this reinforcement should be sent immediately.*"

But on receiving the account of the engagement between the two fleets, Sir Henry Clinton called a *second council of war,* in which it was resolved, "That it was advisable to *wait for more favorable accounts* from the Admiral, or

* At this time, that is, when this council of war came to this *decision,* five of the King's ships were so disabled as to be incapable of service for a considerable time, and one burnt, from having been rendered entirely useless. This council of war must have been assembled about *sixteen days* after Admiral Graves had sailed.

for the arrival of Admiral Digby, who was daily expected, with three sail of the line; *it being known that Earl Cornwallis had provisions to last to the end of October.**

This shows the danger of delay, in all the concerns of life; but in none more so than in the military and naval profession.

While time was thus flying on silver pinions at New York, the hoary sire was crawling on those of lead at York Town, where the flattering hope of relief was poured into the ear, but never gladdened the heart, or met the ardent gaze of its desponding garrison; whose despair or courage was alike unavailing, encircled as it was on one side by the largest fleet that ever covered the surface of the Chesapeak, while on the other it was enveloped by the finest and most numerous army that Washington had ever had under his command.

Each day brought the enemy's approaches nearer to his Lordship's scarcely erected works, as is shown in Lord Cornwallis's letter of the 15th October, 1781, addressed to Sir Henry Clinton, of which the following is an extract.

"My situation now becomes very critical. Experience has shewn that our *fresh earthen works* do not resist their powerful artillery, so that we shall soon be exposed to an assault in *ruined works, in a bad position,* and with weakened numbers.

"The safety of the place is therefore so precarious, that *I cannot recommend* that the *fleet and army* should *run great risk* in *endeavouring to save us.*"†

This then was the situation to which this unfortunate army was reduced, from the want of promptitude in the Commander-in-Chief, combined with his want of confi-

* Beatson's Memoirs, vol. 5, p. 280. The members appear to have laid a great stress upon York being provisioned, while more important things seem to have escaped their notice.

† Beatson's Appendix.

dence in Lord Cornwallis, and from having selected such a spot as York Town for the British to make a stand on, it being unprovided with any fortifications, previous to the 22nd of August; from which time the whole army were occupied in constructing *temporary works* for its protection, instead of being able to act offensively against La Fayette; or to make the smallest effort to prevent the junction between the corps under that officer and the troops landed from De Grasse's fleet, in the James River, under Monsieur de St. Simon.

On the 17th of October, Lord Cornwallis, finding it to be impossible to defend his dilapidated works any longer, attempted to transport his remaining efficient force across the York River, leaving the sick and wounded behind him; in the desperate hope of making his escape through Maryland and Pensylvania, or of deferring his capture for a time. Part of his troops had got over to Gloucester, when the very elements seemed to have conspired against him, a sudden gale arising, which prevented his boats returning until it was too late to proceed in the attempt; the enemy having penetrated his Lordship's intention. This reduced him to the necessity of adopting the only alternative left him, that of *surrendering;* in order to prevent the place being taken by storm. On the 19th of October, the British army amounting only to 4017 men fit for duty, marched out with the honors of war, and surrendered to Washington, whose force amounted to 21,000 men.*

With a view to put the reader in possession of Lord Cornwallis's opinion of York Town, and at the same time to shew him when his Lordship was first taught to expect the assistance of the *fleet,* and when it was concerted between the military and naval Commanders-in-Chief to *cooperate for his relief,* I shall beg leave to subjoin a few

* See Stedman's account of the proceedings of Lord Cornwallis's army, in his History of that War.

extracts from the correspondence which took place on this subject between Sir Henry Clinton and Lord Cornwallis. The first is an extract from one written by his Lordship in reply to a letter he had received from Sir Henry, dated the 11th of June, 1781, "recommending his Lordship to take a defensive station on any healthy spot, be it at Williamsburgh or York Town."

EXTRACT.

"Williamsburgh, June 30th, 1781.

"He submitted it to Sir Henry's consideration, *as there was little chance of being able to establish a post for the effectual protection of ships of war, whether it was worth while to hold a sickly defensive post, which always would be exposed to a sudden French attack,* and which experience had now shewn made no diversion in favor of the southern army.*"

[The second letter of Lord Cornwallis, dated "York Town, Virginia, 15th October, 1781," has been already given in page 62, to which I beg to refer the reader.]

In two days after his Lordship was obliged to capitulate, and on the day following marched out and surrendered himself and army to Washington; and the only remaining ship of war which the enemy had *not burnt* in this "*strong position,*" was delivered up to the Comte de Grasse.

The third letter from his Lordship was dated "New York, 2nd December, 1781," of which the following is an extract.

* See Beatson's Appendix, and Stedman's History of the War.

"In regard to the *promise of the exertions of the navy previous to your letter of the 24th of September*, I can only repeat what I had the honor of saying to your Excellency, in the conversation to which you allude, that—*Without any particular engagement for the navy before that date*,* all your letters held out uniformly hopes of relief; and that I had no reason from any of them to suppose that you had *lost sight* of the possibility of effecting it."†

This last extract must, I should think, convince any unprejudiced mind, that when Admiral Graves left Sandy-hook, on the 31st of August, in order to proceed to the Chesapeak, he had neither been solicited, nor was it even expected by Sir Henry Clinton that he should attempt, under any circumstances, either to *relieve*, *succour*, or *bring away Lord Cornwallis's army*.

APPENDIX.

Having had to allude to extracts introduced, and therefore, to a certain extent, adopted by Rear Admiral Ekins in his work, I shall, for the information of those who may not have that work to refer to, insert them here, that they may themselves be able to judge of their merits, or demerits.

No. 1. In the Political Magazine for 1782, it is said of this affair, that "the *Souverain*, the flag ship of De Grasse, was entangled with the shore in four fathoms water in getting under way at *ten* in the morning.

No. 2. "If Admiral Graves, upon seeing the enemy,

* See Beatson's Appendix and Stedman's History of the War.

† It was not until the 24th of September, or *nineteen days after the action was fought*, and five subsequent to the admiral's return to New York with his shattered fleet, that Admiral Graves promised the assistance of the fleet to *relieve* Lord Cornwallis's army!!

had pushed into the bay, as the wind was perfectly fair for him, *he would have found the French fleet in the utmost confusion*, &c."

No. 3. "He also might have taken up the anchorage *there* at the mouth of the York River in a *strong position*. He would also have found some ships of war of the enemy there, and been at hand to support Lord Cornwallis.

No. 4. "Even after the action he might have attempted to gain the Chesapeak: but this, after five days, De Grasse prevented, by going back there himself.

No. 5. De Grasse, with his fleet, had to *turn* out of the bay, and were in great irregularity, struggling with the shore and shoals of Lyn-haven Bay."

OBSERVATIONS.

The first short article contains only three mis-statements. The Souverain 74 was not the flag-ship of de Grasse, but the Ville de Paris 110; the flag-ship was not *entangled with the shore* in *five fathoms water*," for if she had, she must have remained, as she drew two feet more, and it was a falling tide when she weighed anchor; nor did she get "*under way at ten in the morning*," but at noon.*

In reply to the *second article*, I shall only observe that Admiral Graves's public letter stated—At 2 P. M. "I wore the fleet to bring them on the same *tack with the enemy*, and *nearly parallel to them*."† Now if the enemy's fleet was in confusion when the British van reached the outer edge of the Middle-ground, how could Admiral Graves have formed his fleet in a line parallel to that of the enemy?

In answer to the third article, it is only necessary to observe, that—Admiral Graves could *not have anchored his fleet*, as stated in that article, because the wind was

* In the preceding page, Rear Admiral Ekins states that—*At eleven, the enemy's large ships hove in sight at anchor*; consequently the above circumstances could not have taken place at ten.

† The last part of the above extract from Admiral Graves's letter, has been most unaccountably excluded from Rear Admiral Ekins's version of it.

not so perfectly fair for him, as to have enabled him to have done so with an *adverse* and falling tide:* unless it can be shown that a man-of-war can lay within five points of the wind; and the position suggested by the writer for the fleet to have anchored in, would have been *seventeen miles* from Lord Cornwallis's army.

With respect to the fourth article, it is to be regretted that the writer of it had not been more explicit, in pointing out what benefit was likely to result from Admiral Graves "gaining the Chesapeak" after the action, supposing such to have been his purpose. Could Admiral Graves have refitted his disabled fleet there? And what was to have been the object of such an attempt?

The fifth, and last article, betrays such a total ignorance of the Chesapeak generally, and of Lyn-haven Bay in particular, as well as of the time and circumstances under which the Comte de Grasse left it, as to require no answer whatever, or any attempt at its refutation.

That such loose, incoherent, and undigested remarks and comments should have been published at the *time* to mislead the public mind, to answer a political purpose, or to shift the odium from one individual to another, no one can be astonished at; but that they should have found their way into a work professedly written to convey information to young sea officers, and to instruct them in tactics, is rather an unusual mode of inspiring them with veneration for those whose conduct they ought to be taught to esteem, to venerate, and to imitate.

Is it not dreadful then to think that our Admirals who are sacrificing all the sweets of domestic comfort, all the endearing ties of social intercourse, and risking health, and perhaps, life itself in the service of their country, should, in the execution of this patriotic duty, be subject

* These considerations appear to have been too minute, and too trifling, for the writer of the above article. The ebb ran on that day until between six and seven in the evening; or until after it was dark.

to such unfounded insinuations against their professional character, as the incoherent passages which were published in the said "*Political Magazine*" must inflict upon any feeling and honourable mind.

I shall now give the reader a slight sketch of Portsmouth in Virginia, which I cannot but think, was the place, of all others in that neighbourhood, for the British army to have made a stand at, with a view to resist the storm, which was well known to be impending over it in that province, months ere it burst upon, and overwhelmed it.

Portsmouth, in Virgina, is situated on a small tongue of land, projecting into the estuary of the Elizabeth river, washed on the eastern side by that river; and on the west by another, sufficiently large to afford protection from an attack by land. These circumstances, and its vicinity to Hampton Roads, and Lyn-haven Bay, no doubt influenced Generals Leslie and Arnold, in 1780, and in 1781, to select it as the most appropriate spot for a place of arms. The former officer commenced, and the latter finished the fortifications required for that purpose: nor was its value diminished on the occasion in question, in the estimation of Lord Cornwallis, whose military experience and local knowledge was of little avail, when set in competition with the positive mandate of his commanding officer, to evacuate it, and to take possession of York Town, unfortified, and seventeen miles distant from any anchorage for line of battle ships; and from whence he could not retreat.

That valuable work, the "Annual Register for 1781," in speaking of this place says, "Portsmouth had been strongly recommended, and *unwillingly quitted* by the Commanders then on that service, as a post calculated for maintaining by land a kind of warfare, at once defensive on their part, and extremely distresssing to the province, and at the same time, for affording such a station to the

British fleets and cruizers, as would render them entirely master of that great bay;" yet it was evacuated! Had the British army been at Portsmouth, the wind was fair enough for the British fleet to have proceeded to it, and to have taken up its anchorage in Hampton Roads; but it was not fair to proceed to the mouth of the York River, during that day, as it was imagined by the writer of the Political Magazine, as has been already shown. That the fleet might have been better conducted into action I have admitted, but that more could have been done I doubt, and whether Cornwallis's army could have been brought away, had the Admiral been *requested* or *instructed to do so,* is a problem that no mortal, I believe, now can solve.

LIST OF THE ENGLISH AND FRENCH FLEETS.

BRITISH LINE OF BATTLE.

Ships.	*Guns.*	*Captains, &c.*
Shrewsbury,	74,	M. Robinson
Intrepid,	64,	A. J. P. Molloy
Alcide,	74,	C. Thompson
Princessa,	70,	Rear Adml. Drake, C. Knatchbull
Ajax	74,	N. Carrington
Terrible,	74,	W. C. Finch
Europe,	64,	S Child
Montague,	74,	G. Bowen
Royal Oak,	74,	J. T. Ardesoife
London,	90,	Rear Adml. Graves, D. Graves
Bedford,	74,	T. Graves
Resolution,	74,	Lord R. Manners
America,	64,	S. Thompson
Centaur,	74,	J. N. Inglefield
Monarch,	74,	F. Reynolds
Barfleur,	90,	Sir Sam. Hood, R. A. Alexander Hood
Invincible,	74,	C. Saxton
Belliqueux,	64,	J. Brine
Alfred,	74,	W. Bayne

One 50 and six frigates.

FRENCH LINE OF BATTLE.

Ships.	*Guns.*	*Admirals.*
Pluton,	74,	
Marsellois,	74,	
Bourgogne,	74,	
Diadem,	74,	
Reflechi,	64,	
Auguste,	84,	Bougainville
St. Esprit,	84,	
Caton,	64,	
Cesar,	74,	
Destin,	74,	
La Ville de Paris,	110,	De Grasse
Victoire,	74,	
Sceptre,	74,	
Northumberland,	74,	
Palmier,	74,	
Solitaire,	64,	
Citoyen,	74,	
Scipion,	74,	
Magnanime,	74,	
Hercule,	74,	
Languedoc,	84,	Montiel
Zèlé	74,	
Hector,	74,	
Souverain,	74,	

Charon,	44,	Burnt at *York Town* by red hot shot from the enemy's batteries
*Guadaloupe,	28,	
Vulcan,	8,	
Bonetta,	14,	taken with the army
Richmond,	32,	Captured by the French fleets.
Iris,	32,	
*Loyalist,	14,	

The Ships having this * before their names were ordered to cruize off the Capes to give intelligence to the Admiral of De Grasse's arrival.

Le Glorieux,	74,	Blocking up the York River.
Le Valliant,	64,	
Le Triton,	64,	
Le Duc de Bourgogne,	84,	The Rhode Island squadron, under Mons. de Barras.
Le Neptune	74,	
Le Conquerant,	74,	
L' Ardent	64,	
L' Eveillé	64,	
Le Jason	64,	
Le Province	64,	
Le Sagettaire	54,	
L' Experiment, and two frigates,	50,	Blocking up the James River.

EXPLANATION OF THE PLATE OF THE CHESAPEAK.

A. The position of the French fleet at anchor.

B.B. The British fleet at half past 2 P. M., the van bearing down in *succession.*

F. The French fleet, the centre and rear edging away.

C. The Middle-ground.

D. The Horse-shoe sand.

E.E. The "*strong position*" according to the writer in the "Political Magazine" for the British fleet to have anchored in.

G.G.G. The position taken up by the French fleet after the action.

H. York spit; nineteen miles from York Town.

J.J. The position of the French fleet at anchor according to Mr. Clerk and Rear Admiral Ekins, on the morning of the 5th of September.

N. Norfolk in ruins.

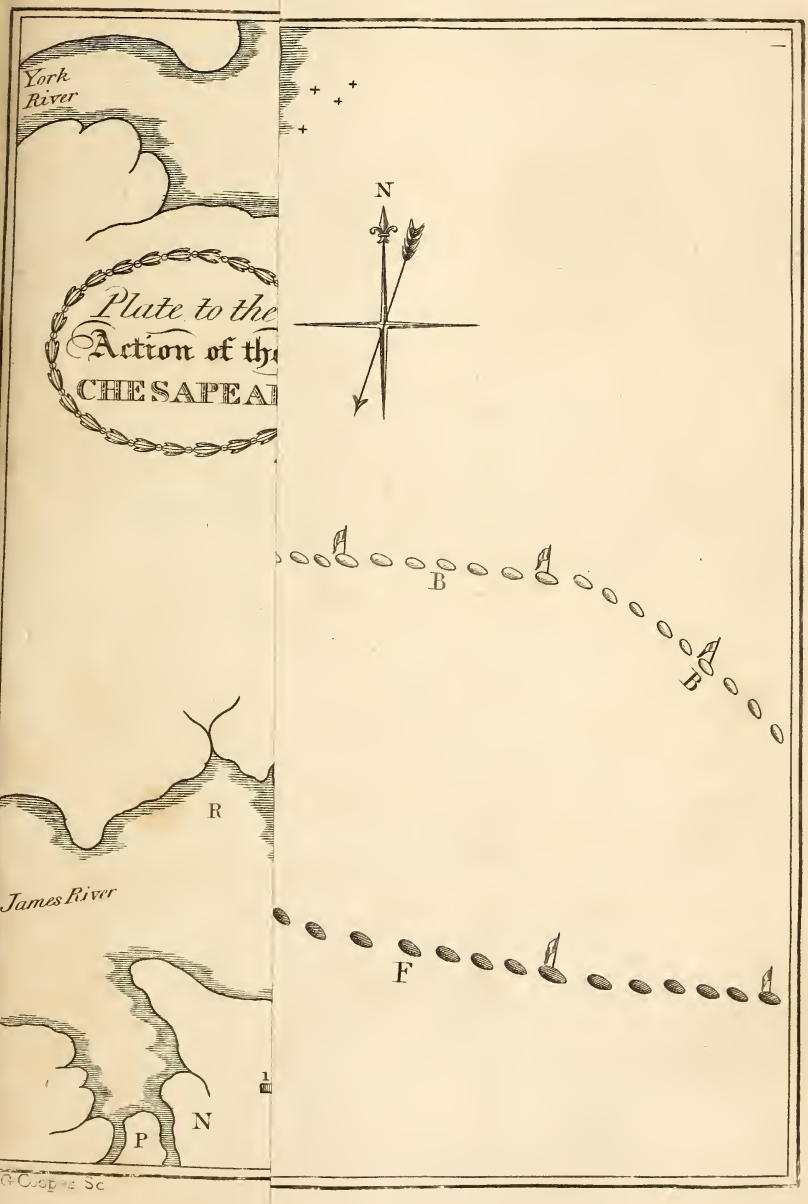
P. Portsmouth.

O. Old Point Comfort.

R. Hampton Roads.

N.B. The variation of the compass was one degree westerly; and the ebb tide began to make at noon.

The Plate would not admit of the four headmost French ships being included in it; but their positions may be easily imagined.


York River
Plate to the
Action of the
CHESAPEAK
N
B
B
R
James River
F
P
N

York River
H
Chesapeak Bay
E E
Plate to the
Action of the
CHESAPEAK
G
G
G
N
C
B
B
D
R
O
James River
A
C Henry
Lynn Haven Bay
F
1
2
Leagues
N
P

SIR SAMUEL HOOD'S ACTIONS,

AT ST. CHRISTOPHER'S.

SIR SAMUEL HOOD'S ACTIONS,

AT ST. CHRISTOPHER'S.

When the Comte de Grasse had completed his intended operations in the Chesapeak, he detached a squadron of seven or eight sail of the line to Hispaniola, to escort the trade to Europe;* and with *twenty-nine* he proceeded to Martinique, where he arrived on the 26th of November, 1781.

Sir Samuel Hood, with *nineteen* sail of the line, left Sandy-Hook on the 11th of November, to return to his station, in order to watch, with so inferior a force, the French admiral. He arrived at Barbadoes on the 5th of January, when he found the St. Albans, of 64 guns, lately arrived from England to *reinforce* his squadron.† The opportune arrival of this squadron, small as it was, prevented the Comte de Grasse from prosecuting his intended

*It appears that the French Admiral had detained the *trade* bound to France, at Cape Frangois, ever since the preceding July, in order that he might keep his fleet entire to act in the Chesapeak. If the British government had sanctioned, or a British Admiral had adopted such a measure, however necessary to carry an important political operation, the one would have been turned out, and the other would have been hung: no wonder that they succeeded and we failed.

† The French Admiral at the same time was in daily expectation of *twelve sail of the line*, to reinforce his already superior fleet. The French were acting on the grand scale in America, while we were keeping our ships at home literally doing nothing; except occasionally relieving the garrison at Gibraltar, for which purpose, and to calm the fears of John Bull, all our *best* ships were treasured up.

attack upon that Island—a measure which he relinquished the moment he heard of Sir Samuel Hood's arrival.

On the 14th of January, the Admiral left it to proceed to Antigua, having been informed that the French armament had changed its destination, and was seen steering for St. Christopher's. On his passage, Sir Samuel Hood was joined by the Russel, which had been under repair at English Harbour, Antigua, ever since the action with De Grasse, off Martinique, in the preceding April;* and by the Prudent, an old and very defective 64 gun ship, from the North American station, where she had been incapable of service for several months, in consequence of the injury she had sustained in the action fought between Admiral Arbuthnot and Mons. D'Estouches, in the month of March, in the preceding year.

These circumstances are occasionally adverted to, in order to show the reader the sort of tools with which British Admirals had to work in that unfortunate war, and to enable the young tactician to form a more correct judgment on the exertions of the officers of that day, than too many of the productions of the present will afford him the means of obtaining.

The British fleet, now augmented to twenty-two sail of the line, (six of which carried only 64 guns,†) anchored in St. John's road in the island of Antigua, on the afternoon of the 21st of January. Here Sir Samuel Hood was informed that the enemy had actually commenced their attack on the island of St. Christopher's, but he could procure no certain account of their force. The Admiral immediately communicated with General Prescott,

* Had the disabled ships been sent to England to be repaired, and others sent out to supply their place, much would have been saved in every way to the nation.

† Ships of that class carried only 24 pounders on the gun-deck, while 74 gun ships mounted 32 pounders on the same deck: the French ships mostly carried thereon 36 pounders, equal in weight to 40 pounds English;—circumstances seldom noticed by Naval Historians.

the commander of the forces, and obtained from him 700 men, who were embarked on board the frigates with all possible dispatch. With such inadequate means Sir Samuel Hood sailed from Antigua, on the 23rd of January, to attempt, if it were possible, the relief of Brimstone-hill, the only fortress in the island of St. Christopher's capable of making the slightest resistance to the French army landed there, amounting to 9000 men, under the Marquis de Bouville.

Before day-break of the 24th, as the fleet was sailing before the wind under top-sails and top-gallant-sails, the Nymph frigate, owing to the misconduct of the officer of the watch, very improperly hove-to right-a-head of the Alfred, the leading ship of the starboard division of the fleet, which ship, not perceiving or expecting such an un-officer-like proceeding on the part of the frigate, was actually on board of, and had nearly cut in two, the Nymph, ere any measures could be adopted in either ship to prevent such a catastrophe.*

This apparently unfortunate accident compelled Sir Samuel Hood to arrest the progress of his fleet, in order to ascertain the extent of the injury sustained by the Alfred, and the possibility of repairing it at sea. The troops were removed from the frigate, her damages requiring her return to Antigua to be repaired. Upon investigation it was found that the Alfred had carried away the knee of the head below the *bob-stays*, and had sustained some other trifling damage, but that her defects might be made good at sea, although to do so it would detain the fleet until the next day, when it was expected she might be rendered fit for service.

This accident was the source of much uneasiness to Sir Samuel Hood, whose ardent mind could but ill brook

* The officer of the watch, on board the Nymph, died a Lieutenant, although extremely well connected, and although he served in the subsequent war.

delay when the service of his country required promptitude and exertion. But the allotted period of the humiliation and degradation of Britain having elapsed, and a brighter dawn beginning to break upon her operations,* what was then a subject of regret, proved to have been the work of a superintending Providence, to effect what in all probability would not have been accomplished, had not this seeming mis-chance occurred—the correction of an enemy whose arrogance, the result of a successful warfare of nearly four years, had expanded to the utmost verge of its possible extension; and which, but for this occurrence, might not have met the chastisement it merited: for had the French fleet been attacked at anchor, the result of the battle might have been very different.

In the course of the morning (the 24th January,) his Christian Majesty's cutter, L'Espion, was captured on her way to Basse-terre, having shells, &c. on board for the French army investing Brimstone-Hill.

The fleet was obliged to continue to lay-to throughout the whole of the 24th, in order to effect the repairs of the Alfred, where all the carpenters of the fleet were collected together for that purpose. In the mean time the Commander-in-Chief was occupied in making a new disposition of his fleet, in consequence of its leading ship being incapable of continuing in her station in the line. In lieu of that ship the St. Albans, Captain Inglis, was ordered to lead, and the Alfred to take her station in the rear. The flag officers were also called on board, as was Captain Inglis, to communicate to them the plan of operations contemplated, under the various circumstances contingent on the movements of the enemy's fleet.

Towards the evening, the look-out frigates made the signal that the enemy's fleet was standing out from Basse-terre road, St. Christopher's.

* This happy change in the aspect of affairs Mr. Clerk arrogates to himself, instead of ascribing it to Him who directs all things here below.

On the morning of the 25th, the French fleet was seen a long way to leeward, standing out from Basse-terre, with the larboard tacks on-board. At ten o'clock, the Alfred's damages being sufficiently repaired to proceed on service, the signal was made to fill, and to form in line a-head, on the starboard tack; the French fleet was then directly to leeward, and still on the larboard, or opposite tack to that of the British; the isle of Nevis being on the lee-bow of the former. The signal was then made for the division of Rear Admiral Drake, who commanded in the van, to fill, and make a demonstration of proceeding to Basse-terre. This was only meant as a feint by Sir Samuel Hood, to perplex his adversary, who immediately tacked his fleet, to prevent the intended movement. Sir Samuel Hood then recalled Rear Admiral Drake's division, and brought to, as if determined to await the combat.

This so completely deceived De Grasse, that he again tacked, and continued to stand to the southward, doubtless in the expectation of the wind veering round to that point of the compass, as the day advanced, and which would have enabled him to have laid up for the British fleet, when he again tacked to stand to the northward.

Here we perceive a display of tactics hitherto unpractised by one of the parties, at least, and carried into execution by a British Admiral, before any one of Mr. Clerk's printed papers on Naval Tactics could possibly have reached the West Indies.

Sir Samuel Hood again summoned to him the Captain of the St. Albans, in order to communicate some further instructions, and to furnish him with his own pilot, who was well acquainted with the position of the *bank*, on the edge of which Sir Samuel Hood intended to anchor his fleet, in order *to prevent the enemy anchoring* outside him.

It does not appear to have been conceived by De Grasse, that Sir Samuel Hood, with a fleet so inferior in point of

numbers to his own, would attempt to proceed to the anchorage he had quitted.

The British fleet continued to lay-to with their heads to the shore, or to the northward, while that of France continued standing out, or to the southward. This anxious moment of awful suspense, between the hope of being able to gain the anchorage, and the expectation of being compelled to fight on unequal terms a superior enemy under sail, is finely pourtrayed by Sir Samuel Hood in his public letter, wherein he says,

"Would the event of a battle have determined the fate of the island, I would without hesitation have attacked the enemy,* *from a knowledge how much was to be expected from an English squadron, commanded by men, among whom is no other contention, than who should be most forward in rendering service to his king and country; herein I placed the utmost confidence, and should not, I trust, have been disappointed.*"†

At one o'clock the French fleet having got to a considerable distance from the land, the signal was made for the fleet to fill, and to form in a line a-head one cable's length asunder. No sooner was the line formed, than the signal was made to the St. Albans to bear away, and lead the fleet to the appointed rendezvous—Basse-terre road; keeping the Nevis shore close on-board, in order to prevent the French fleet from getting within them. This was complied with so completely to the letter, that the Solebay was wrecked from not having room to pass between the line of battle ship she was a-breast of, and the western point of Nevis.

* The remaining passages of the above paragraph are most unaccountably suppressed by a late nautical writer.

† Thus it was that the immortal Nelson always reasoned. Little can be hoped from the operations of a fleet in which there is no mutual confidence between the Commander and those under his command.

De Grasse appears to have beheld this with astonishment, and as if doubtful whether it were a second feint, or a movement intended to be followed up by the British Admiral, he seemed uncertain how to act. But when he perceived the whole fleet following their gallant leader, he *tacked his fleet together*,* that being the most expeditious method of retrieving the error he had committed, that of standing so far out to sea, and of intercepting the march of his sagacious opponent: for had he tacked his fleet in succession from van to rear, so much time would have been lost that his van ship would not have reached the stern-most ship of the British fleet, until she had got to the anchorage.

In consequence of the Comte de Grasse having tacked his fleet together, as before intimated, the French fleet approached within gun shot, at a little before 3 o'clock: it being on the starboard tack, although formed on the larboard line, of bearing *i. e.* in a bow and quarter line. De Grasse, who was in the centre of his line, fetched, in the Ville de Paris, nearly a-breast of the Canada, while the head-most ship of his fleet was drawing in a-breast of Sir Samuel Hood's ship, the Barfleur.

Their van ship boldly advanced towards the Barfleur, who reserved her fire until the brave Frenchman approached within musket shot, when she opened such a well directed, and quickly repeated fire, that in a few minutes, the French ship had her jib-boom shot away, her sails nearly cut into ribbands, and her rigging so cut up,

* This the planter in his excellent account of this business, very naturally described it thus :—" The French immediately *bore down* diagonally towards our centre ;" which expression the author of " Naval Battles" thus explains in a note. " *This must be intended for 'hauled up,' the French fleet being to leeward.*" As the observer was not a seaman, he might not know the distinction. Had the French only " hauled up," they might as well have put on their night-caps.

that she quickly put her helm a-weather, and bore away from her redoubted antagonist.*

De Grasse, perceiving an opening in our line between the Canada and Prudent, in consequence of the inferior sailing of the latter ship, boldly attempted to sever it, and thereby cut off the Prudent, Montagu, Alfred, and America; but Cornwallis, with his accustomed promptitude, threw his after sails a-back, and thereby placed himself in the breach, which he so nobly defended, that his gigantic opponent was glad to relinquish the hazardous enterprise, either through apprehension of himself being cut off, or of the Ville de Paris getting a-ground, should the attempt be persevered in.†

The gallant conduct of Captain Cornwallis was immediately followed by Commodore Affleck in the Bedford, and Lord Robert Manners in the Resolution, who also threw all a-back, by which, time was given to the Prudent and Alfred, &c., to recover their relative position in the line, and other ships of the enemy, of easier draft of water than the Ville de Paris, were prevented from attempting to break through the interval occasioned by the Prudent's bad sailing. Sir Samuel Hood looked on undismayed at this attack upon his rear, knowing that he could *confide in every individual Captain;* and very coolly ordered the signal to be made for the ships a-head to make more sail, in order to hasten their anchoring as much as possible. In the mean time the St. Albans had taken up her station, and anchored at 3 p. m. just within Green-

* A tolerable proof of the dexterity of our seamen in the use of the great gun, although then unassisted by locks or sights, to aid their aim or accelerate their operation.

† I have been informed by a brother officer who was in one of the ships that had just anchored, that for a moment he could perceive the Ville de Paris's jib on the inside of the British line. Had our fleet been situated as represented by Mr. Clerk and Rear Admiral Ekins, in their extraordinary plates of this action, the above four ships would have been cut off.

point, but not quite so near to it as was intended, and the other ships did the same in succession, while the centre and rear were closely engaged with the enemy, who pressed them close until every ship was anchored,* when the French wore in succession and stood out to sea, where we will leave them to their own reflections for the present, that the true position of the British fleet may be exhibited to the view of the reader, who, if his knowledge of it has been only obtained from the works and plates of Mr. Clerk, and Rear Admiral Ekins, can have no idea whatever of its actual position.

In the first place instead of anchoring nineteen ships in a straight line, as by these writers they are most unaccountably represented, having the Alfred, Canada, and Resolution, placed at a right angle thereto, and a-breast of the centre ship in the British line, where they could have been of *no earthly use*, and would have been exposed to the enemy's fire without the possibility of returning a shot, and could not have contributed to prevent the French fleet from anchoring close to the town of Basse-terre, Sir Samuel Hood, in the most *judicious* and *seaman-like* manner, anchored his ships in an irregular curve from the head-most ship to the twelfth in the line, whence in conformity with the edge of the bank, the line assumed the form of a semi-crescent, without the slightest interruption from the first to the last ship in the whole line.

But before I proceed further, it will be necessary to observe that the Admiral, perceiving the St. Albans had not anchored near enough to the shore, ordered the Bedford, Russel, and Montagu, from the rear to anchor a-head of that ship, which effectually shut out the approach of the French fleet in that direction.

* The moment each ship struck soundings on the edge of the bank, she immediately anchored—how then could the French fleet have anchored without them?

By these displays of genuine, untutored tactics, the British Admiral prevented his fleet being doubled with impunity, either at his van or rear; nor could the enemy assail the main body of his fleet, except while under sail, which he well knew would not be very advantageous to them: as our ships, from having springs upon their cables, could, to a certain extent, concentrate or diffuse their fire at pleasure; an advantage their adversaries could not possess while under way.

During the night, some other movements were made to strengthen the rear; one or two ships having anchored so very near to the edge of the bank, that a sudden squall caused their anchors to drop off it. An order also was given that any injury sustained from the enemy during the day, should be repaired while darkness shrouded them from their view. Owing to this judicious arrangement, the enemy knew not the extent of injury inflicted by them.*

Having placed the fleet securely at anchor, I shall now inform the reader of Sir Samuel Hood's intended mode of attack, had the Comte de Grasse retained his original position in Basse-terre road.

Had the French fleet remained at anchor, which they might have done, without "feeling their situation disadvantageous," as it has been asserted by a naval writer,† it was Sir Samuel Hood's intention to have made an attack upon them in the following manner. 'The van ship was to stand on till a-breast of the van ship of the enemy, as per course indicated in the order previously issued at St. John's Road, Antigua; and after having delivered each ship her whole fire upon the two headmost ships of the

* These useful hints are thrown out as much for the benefit of the young sea officer, as to do honor to the genius that originated them.

† See "Naval Battles." Admiral Byron, after the battle off Grenada, was attacked there by D'Estaing, the former having only 20, while the latter had 26 ships; whereas De Grasse had 29 to 22 ships of the line: perhaps Rear Admiral Ekins was not aware of this circumstance.

enemy, to haul off in succession, as per course indicated; and then, by tacking, to return in the same succession, and again, and again, to repeat each ship her whole fire.'*

On the morning of the 26th, at half-past eight, the French fleet was seen coming, as close as possible, round Nevis Point, in compact and regular order, intending to attempt a passage between Green Point, and the Bedford, now the headmost ship in the British line. But, so singularly felicitous was the position taken up by the British Admiral, that when the enemy's leading ship† approached Green Point, the wind headed her, so that she could not fetch above the third ship in our line. The springs of our van ships were so admirably attended to, that the broadsides of four of them were brought to bear at the same time upon the unfortunate Frenchman, and were opened with tremendous effect, when the wind headed him, which it did when he got the length of Green Point.

The crash occasioned by their destructive broadsides was so tremendous on board the Pluton, that whole pieces of plank were seen flying from her off-side, ere she could escape the cool concentrated fire of her determined adversaries. This ship being more distinctly marked as she proceeded along the British line, received the first fire of every ship in passing. She was, indeed, in so shattered a state, as to be compelled to bear away for St. Eustatius; it was even asserted that she struck her colours, but that was denied on their part. The French ships generally approached the British van with more caution, and bore away sooner than their leader had done, with the exception of a few, among whom the Ville de Paris was one. De Grasse, in order to prolong the individual encounter as much as possible, counter-braced his after yards, in order

* Clerk's Tactics. The above plan of attack is not given by the author of "Naval Battles," which is somewhat singular.

† Supposed to be the Pluton, whose Captain gave during the war repeated proofs of valour.

to retard his ship's way through the water while running with the wind on the starboard quarter, along the British line. But as he hauled to the wind in rounding the British rear, where it formed the inner horn of the crescent, these sails, from becoming more a-back, detained the French Admiral a considerable time a-breast of the Resolution, Prudent, Canada, and Alfred, in succession, as the Ville de Paris slowly forged a-head, and fired upon them: in this De Grasse was supported by those ships which were a-stern, or immediately a-head of him. During this short but tremendous conflict between the respective combatants, in that part of the *field* of battle, nothing whatever could be seen of them for upwards of twenty minutes, save De Grasse's white flag at the main-top gallant-mast-head of the Ville de Paris, gracefully floating above the immense volume of smoke that enveloped them, or the pendants of those ships which were occasionally perceptible when an increase of breeze would waft away the smoke that had screened them from our ardent gaze.

In the afternoon of the same day, the French made a second attack on our line. It commenced at fifty minutes past two, and was principally directed against the centre and rear—the morning attack having convinced them that the British van was not to be asailed with impunity.

The damage sustained by the enemy's fleet was of that nature, that when they stood towards us the next day, men were seen over very many of their ships' sides, for the purpose of stopping the numerous shot-holes that were very visible. And the Ville de Paris had received some between wind and water, so low as to be obliged to be heeled at least three streaks to windward when standing off on the larboard tack, she having engaged on the starboard side in the three attacks, above described.

Never perhaps was a superior enemy so completely foiled as De Grasse was upon this occasion. He had doubtless calculated upon playing the old French game of

crippling his adversary's ships, by keeping at long shot distance, as had been the practice of their fleets throughout the war; and by which ours would have been compelled to return into port: but now they had to encounter one whose head was not filled with theoretic tactics, but with a profound knowledge of his profession, as well as of the men whom he had the honour to command, and on whom he knew he could rely in the moment of difficulty or danger.

Sir Samuel Hood not only secured his fleet from any assault by sea, but also took measures to prevent the enemy from molesting it from the land, where it was infinitely more vulnerable:—for could they have thrown up any batteries, on the hill situated above Green Point, his position would have been no longer tenable. To prevent such an attempt on the part of the enemy he landed the troops that accompanied the fleet in Frigate's Bay, where they took post on the eminence that commanded the narrow neck which unites the southern point of St. Christopher's with the main island. The troops in landing had a skirmish with the Irish brigade, whom they drove before them, and from whom they took some prisoners.

Sir Samuel Hood offered to land two battalions of marines, amounting to fourteen hundred men, together with the 69th regiment, serving as marines, which force with that brought from Antigua, would have amounted to two thousand four hundred men. With these he proposed to attack the French posts at Basse-terre, in order to create a diversion in favour of the British Garrison defending Brimstone-hill. The offer of the marines, as well as the proposed attack was declined by General Prescott, because he did not think it practicable to maintain a post in that position.*

The enemy's fleet made frequent demonstrations of at-

* See Beatson's Naval and Military Memoirs.

tacking us, but never come near enough to engage. On the 12th of February their fleet amounted to thirty-one ships of the line, a strong reinforcement from France under the Marquis de Vaudreuil having joined, which not only supplied the place of their disabled ships, but contributed to swell their numbers. On the 13th, the Comte de Grasse, despairing of being able to assail with any prospect of advantage, our little fleet of twenty-two ships, prudently anchored under Nevis.

Although Mr. Clerk's account of this affair be not strictly correct in all its parts, yet every credit is given by him to the professional abilities of the Admiral who commanded, and to the officers and men who served under him. To be sure, in the preface to his second edition, he distantly hints, that the account of this achievement arrived in England soon after he had published his "fifty copies" of the "Attack from the Windward," when "our affairs took," he says, "a different turn; and I have since had the satisfaction to see, by the adoption of *my system*, a decided and permanent superiority given to our fleets;"* thus modestly leaving it open to the reader either to attribute to *him* or not, as he may think proper, the merit of having suggested the plan so ably executed by Sir Samuel Hood. But as it does not appear that he ever went to Portsmouth to communicate his ideas to that officer, who was Commissioner at that Dock-yard, previous to his being sent to the West Indies; and as the above fifty copies of his work which were published on the 1st of January, 1782, could not have reached Sir Samuel Hood in the West Indies in time to have enabled him to profit by it, as the action took place on the 25th of the same month, it is more than probable that he never saw it.

* Clerk's Tactics, p. xiii. I am at a loss to know what naval action during the late wars was fought upon Mr. Clerk's system, unless it be that off St. Vincent, which may be said to possess some affinity with his general plan of attack from the leeward.

But yet Mr. Clerk's work possesses much valuable matter, displays much genius and persevering industry, notwithstanding there be some small share of vanity occasionally exhibited in the preface.

Rear Admiral Ekins in his "observations" on this brilliant affair says, "had the Comte de Grasse possessed the talents and enterprise of his opponent, he would have made him pay dearly for having with a force so inferior, taken up the anchorage so lately occupied by the French fleet; and which, 'feeling the situation disadvantageous,' they had quitted."

As well might it have been said of the glorious battle of Waterloo, that had the French troops, commanded by Bonaparte, possessed the physical power of those commanded by the great Wellington, they would have obtained the victory; and admitting that such an assertion might be strictly correct, yet no one would give the historian credit for liberality of sentiment, or generosity of feeling, who would so coldly or so negatively commend the hero, who, under Providence, which fitted him and his valiant band for the mighty conflict they were to be engaged in, had achieved the most brilliant and the most important victory by land, which the annals of modern times will have to transmit to an admiring and a grateful posterity.

But to return to the subject in hand—it is much to be regretted, with a reference to the benefit of young officers, that the author of "Naval Battles" had not supplied the lack of "talent" which he considers De Grasse to have been deficient in, by demonstrating to the satisfaction of the intelligent naval reader the possibility, or rather the practicability of the French Admiral having "made him (Sir Samuel Hood) pay dearly for having taken up the anchorage so lately occupied by the French fleet."

Does the gallant author conceive that he has done so by merely advancing the following hypothesis—"*The*

French Admiral should have made his attack upon the van, by anchoring against it in double force, and on the outside of his enemy?" If he do, he must surely have forgotten the reception the French leading ship experienced in the morning attack of the 26th, which is so graphically described in the "Planter's Journal" given by himself, as well as what he himself quotes from an anonymous writer —viz. that Sir Samuel Hood anchored his fleet "*so nearly upon the edge of the bank, that the enemy's fleet could not anchor without it.*"

The same writer also says that "De Grasse quitted the anchorage, feeling the situation disadvantageous." Had he been better acquainted with the naval history of that war, he would have been aware that in the identical situation which the French fleet had occupied* previous to its going out to encounter the British fleet, Admiral Byron, on the same spot, with 20 sail of the line, beat off the Comte D'Estaing, having 26. The French attack was feeble and not persevered in; because, says Matthews, "from the advantageous situation of the British fleet, they would have suffered greatly:" hence we may conclude that the Comte de Grasse did not quit Basse-terre "from feeling the situation disadvantageous," but because he thought by being under sail, that he could out-manoeuvre the British Admiral, whose *tactics* he appears *to have under-rated.*

So negligent had the governor and council of the island been, and so little prepared were they to resist a sudden attack from the enemy, whom perhaps they as little expected, that upon their landing, no less than twelve brass 24-pounders, and two 13-inch mortars with their proper carriages and beds, with 1500 shells, and 6000 24-pound shot, were found by the enemy at the foot of Brimstone-hill,

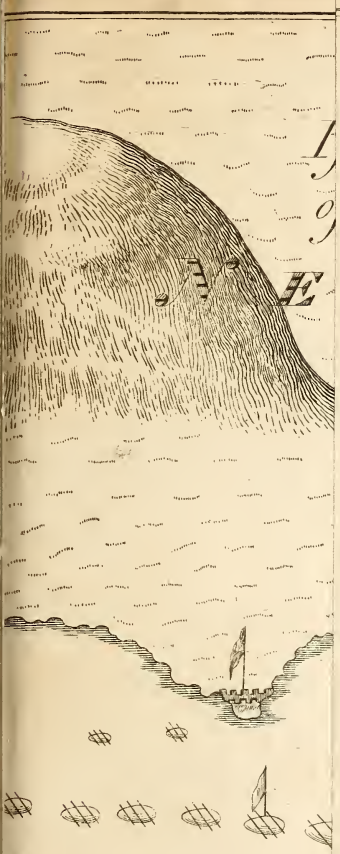
* But which was not the situation in which Sir Samuel Hood anchored his fleet, because Basse-terre was then in the possession of the enemy.

where they had been suffered to remain twelve months, although Sir George Rodney, previous to his return to England on leave, had urged the council to place the cannon, &c. in the fort, and General Grant had given directions to that effect; yet no inquiry appears to have been instituted, or punishment of any kind inflicted on the offender.

On the morning of the 13th of February, De Grasse anchored his fleet, which then amounted to thirty three sail of the line, off Nevis.

On the 14th a flag of truce arrived, giving the unwelcome intelligence of Brimstone-hill having surrendered. This induced Sir Samuel Hood to quit the anchorage, which he did at ten o'clock that night, unobserved or unmolested by the enemy.

The French, at day-light, perceiving that the British fleet had left the anchorage, weighed, and took up their former station off Basse-terre.

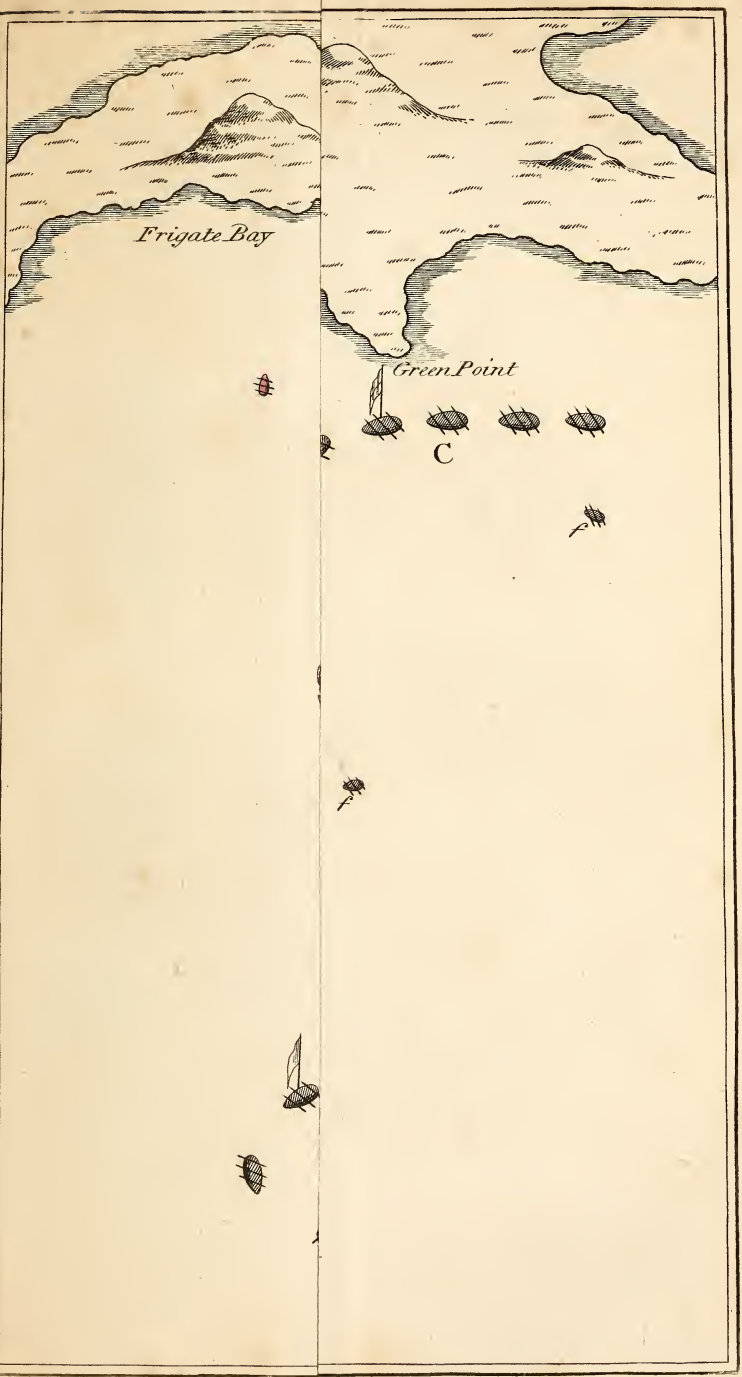


ST KITT'S,
Plate N.º 1

Cooper Sc

Stonehouse

Isle
of
NEVIS
St KITT'S,
Plate N°1
B
f
F



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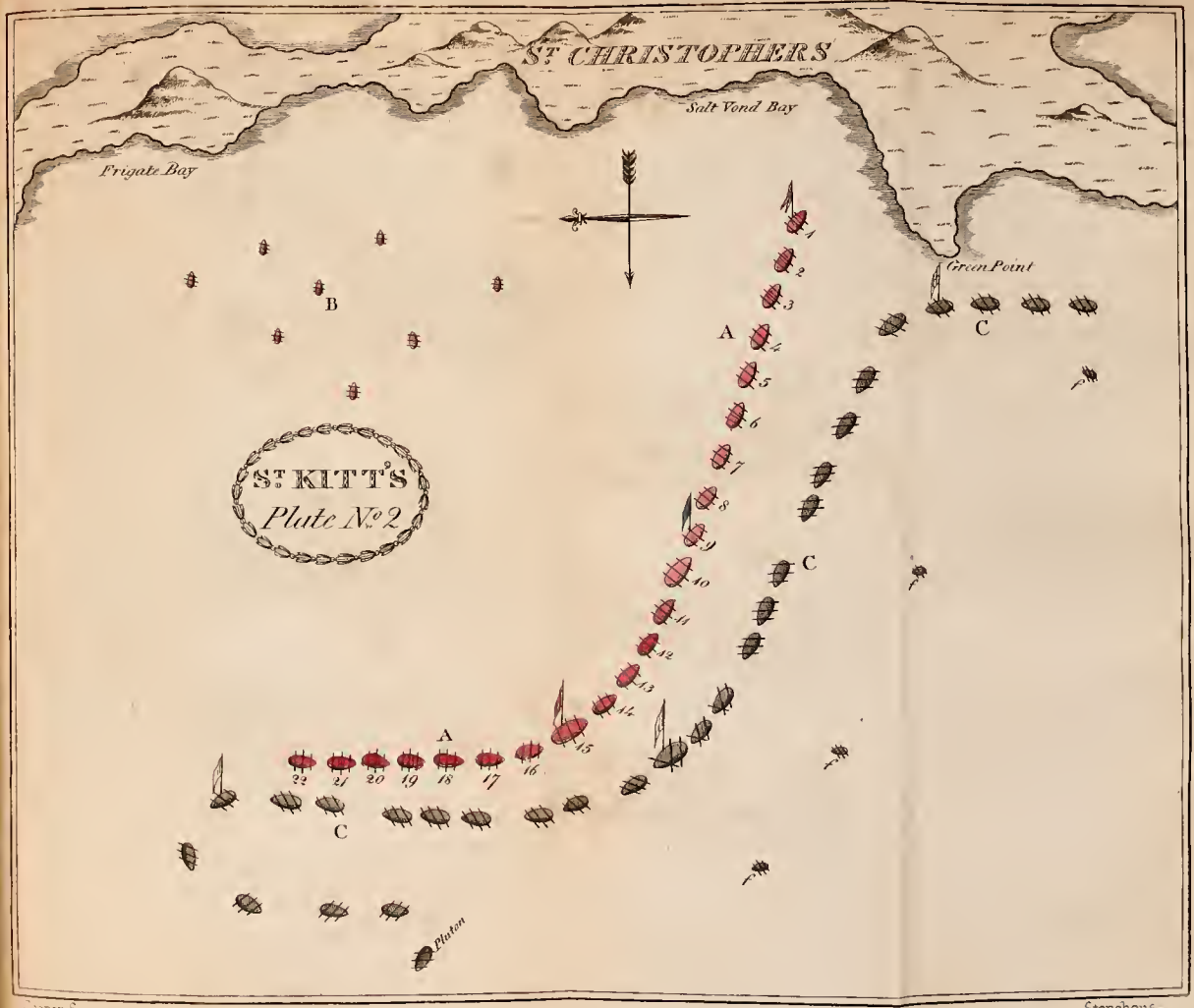

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A list of the British fleet, under the command of Rear Admiral Sir Samuel Hood, Bart., as they lay at anchor in Basse-terre Road, St. Christopher's.

The number against each ship has a reference to that against each ship in the Plates given herewith.

No.	*Ships.*	*Guns.*	*Captains.*	*Flag Officers.*	
1	Bedford,	74,	Graves,	Commodore Affleck	These ships were in the rear in going in.
2	Russel,	74,	Stanhope,		
3	Montague,	74,	Bower,		
4	St. Albans,	64,	Inglis,		
5	Aleide,	74,	C. Thompson,		
6	America	64,	S. Thompson,		
7	Intrepid	64,	Molloy		
8	Torbay,	74,	Gedoin		
9	Princessa,	70,	Knatchbull,	Rear Admiral Drake.	
10	Prince George,	90,	Williams,		
11	Ajax,	74,	Carrington,		
12	Prince William,	64,	Wilkinson,		
13	Shrewsbury,	74,	West,		
14	Invincible,	74,	Saxton,		
15	Barfleur	90,	Knight,	Sir Samuel Hood, Bart.	
16	Monarch,	74,	Reynolds,		
17	Centaur	74,	Inglefield,		
18	Reliqueux	64,	Sutherland,		
19	Resolution,	74,	Lord Robert Manners,		
20	Prudent,	64,	Barclay,		
21	Canada,	74,	Hon. W. Cornwallis,		
22	Alfred,	74,	Baynes.		

List of the French fleet, under Comte de Grasse, at St. Christopher's.

	Ships.	*Guns.*	
1	La Ville de Paris,	110,	Le Comte de Grasse, Admiral,
2	L'Auguste	84,	Mons. de Bougainville, Rear Admiral.
3	Le Duc de Bourgogne,	84,	
4	Le Languedoc,	84,	
5	La Couronne,	84,	
6	Le Neptune,	74,	
7	Le Zèlé,	74,	
8	Le Glorieux,	74,	
9	Le Citoyen,	74,	
10	Le Souverain,	74,	
11	Le Magnanime,	74,	
12	Le Cèsar,	74,	
13	L' Hector,	74,	
14	Le Pluton,	74,	
15	L' Hercule,	74,	
16	Le Scipion,	74,	
17	Le Bourgogne,	74,	
18	Le Dauphin Royal,	74,	
19	Le Magnifique,	74,	
20	Le Sceptre,	74,	
21	Le Northumberland,	74,	
22	Le Conquérant,	74,	
23	Le Marseillois,	74,	
24	Le Palmier,	74,	
25	Le Ardent,	64,	
26	L' Evillé	64,	
27	L' Etonne,	64,	
28	Le Jason,	64,	
29	Le Refléchi,	64,	
30	Le Triomphant,	84,	These Ships arrived from France under Monsieur Vaudreuil, after the actions with Sir Samuel Hood.
31	Le Brave,	74,	
32	Le Bien Aimé,	74,	
33	Le Minotaur,	74,	Ditto Armé en flotte.
34	Le Fier,	54,	

ADMIRAL RODNEY'S ACTIONS

OF THE

NINTH AND TWELFTH OF APRIL,

1782.

ADMIRAL RODNEY'S ACTIONS

OF THE

NINTH AND TWELFTH OF APRIL,

1782.

Admiral Sir George B. Rodney, after having formed a junction with Sir Samuel Hood, proceeded to Gros-Islet-Bay, St. Lucia, where he wooded and watered his fleet preparatory to his proceeding off Fort-Royal Harbour, Martinique, where the Comte de Grasse, with thirty-four sail of the line, two 50-gun ships, and several frigates, was making the necessary preparations to escort a convoy of transports, having troops on board, to Saint Domingo, for the purpose of making an attack on the island of Jamaica, in conjunction with the forces of the king of Spain, who were to be in readiness to join so soon as this armament reached the island of Hispaniola.

Sir George Rodney had in the mean time stationed frigates to watch the enemy's motions, and to give him the earliest intelligence of their quitting that anchorage.

On the morning of the 8th of April, the Andromache frigate, Captain George Anson Byron, was discovered with signals flying, to inform the Admiral of the French fleet having sailed from Fort-Royal Bay. The Admiral immediately made the signal for all boats and persons to repair on board their respective ships, a very necessary

signal, as most of the ships had their boats on shore to complete their water, &c. Shortly after, the signal was made for the fleet to weigh, outermost and leeward-most ships first, and then to chase in the N. E.* quarter. By twelve o'clock every ship was out of the bay, and carrying a press of sail to overtake the enemy, whom they had no doubt of coming up with, as their men-of-war were delayed by the transports which accompanied them. Sir George Rodney commanded the white or centre division, Sir Samuel Hood the red or van division, and Rear Admiral Francis Samuel Drake the blue or rear division; and although the signal to chase was thrown out to stimulate every one to exertion, yet the respective divisions were to keep as much as possible together so as to be able to form into line whenever it might be required.

In the course of the afternoon the fleet passed close by Fort Royal Harbour, but not a single ship of the enemy was to be seen there. At sun-set some of the French ships were seen from our mast heads to the northward, and in the course of the night their lights were discernible from the deck. At day-light, on the morning of the 9th, we had gained on the enemy, who appeared to be very much scattered; fourteen line of battle ships, having two flags among them, were between Dominica and the Saints, and had a good breeze from the E. N. E., while the remainder were becalmed under the land, about St. Rupert's Bay, with the exception of one straggler, who was also becalmed in the N. W. quarter, and at some distance from the other part of their fleet.

At half-past seven A. M. Sir Samuel Hood's division, being a-head, got the breeze, while the centre and rear divisions continued to be becalmed under the high land of Dominica. This of course separated the former from the latter; *however,* Sir Samuel Hood continued to pursue the

* See the note in page 21.

fourteen ships of the enemy that were in possession of the breeze, with only eight ships of his own division.

The ship seen in the N.W. having got the breeze at the same time with our van division, boldly stood for, and endeavoured to weather, the British advanced ships, that being the only way to regain her own fleet then to windward. To such a length did she carry her audacity that she compelled the Alfred, the headmost ship of Sir Samuel Hood's division, to bear up in order to allow her to pass. Every eye was fixed on the bold Frenchman, with the exception of those who were anxiously looking out on the Commander in Chief to make the signal to engage, but who most likely from not supposing it could be an enemy, did not throw out the ardently looked for signal, and therefore not a gun was fired. This is mentioned to shew the state of *discipline* on board the ships *composing Sir Samuel Hood's division*, and that he, though second in command, would not fire a single shot until directed to do so by his Commander-in-Chief.*

As soon as this ship had got out of the reach of the guns of the Barfleur, the flag ship of Sir Samuel Hood, she hoisted her colours, and a flag at the mizen-top-gallant-mast-head, and hauled up her lower deck ports, as if rejoicing at her fortunate escape. The gallant conduct of this ship was the admiration of every one who had the pleasure to behold the determined perseverance and presence of mind of her commander, in adopting the only possible mode of regaining his fleet.

At half-past nine, that part of the French fleet which was in possession of the breeze bore down upon, and en-

* It is more than probable that Sir Samuel Hood's reason for having waited for the signal to engage from his Commander-in-Chief ere he would fire upon the above French ship, arose from the supposition that had he been the occasion of prematurely bringing on an action under the above circumstances, he would have been responsible for its results: for this he, no doubt, will be blamed by those who find it much easier to point out the errors of others, than to act correctly themselves.

gaged, Sir Samuel Hood's isolated division, which then consisted of only eight ships.

In order to prevent the further separation of this division from the main body of the fleet, Sir Samuel Hood directed it by signal to bring-to.* The Comte de Grasse, whose talents have been under-rated by a late professional writer, made his attack upon this division in a most seaman-like manner, and in perfect conformity with the rules of practical tactics. Each ship bore down to engage in rotation, then passed on a-head, tacked, and again fell into the rear, in order to keep up a regular combat with fresh ships. As soon as the breeze reached the other ships of this division, they came up under a press of sail to support their gallant Commander. Among the rest was the Royal Oak, whose crew, while passing under the lee of the Barfleur, filled the lower-top-mast and top-gallant rigging, to give their Admiral three cheers.

She had not been long in her station in the van, when the head of her main-mast was shot away, and with it went of course her main-top-mast, &c.

Commodore Affleck also, although one of the centre division, came up under a crowd of sail to support his old Commander the moment he got the breeze.

At half-past eleven, a partial air of wind from the S. E. enabled part of Sir George Rodney's division to approach the stern-most ships of the enemy, and he immediately commenced an engagement with as many of them as the wind allowed him to bring within the range of his guns.

Rear Admiral Drake also followed his Chief as soon as an air of wind enabled him to put his ships in motion.

When the French Admiral perceived that these portions of the British fleet were approaching near enough to molest his operations on the British van, he very prudently

* Perhaps it would have been better if Sir Samuel Hood had wore round and put his ship's head towards the main body of our fleet: but he possibly had good reasons for doing as he did.

Cooper Sc

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ISLE of DOMINICA
Cape du Capucin
PRINCE RUPERTS BAY
A
A
A
B
B
B
E
E
E
E
10
11
12
13
POSITION
at 45 Minutes
Past 9.

Stonehouse

ordered his ships to keep their wind, when they tacked, after passing the Royal Oak the leading ship.

In doing so, De Grasse prevented the meditated attempt of Admiral Rodney to interpose between the French ships so engaged with Sir Samuel Hood, and those that were to windward.

From this time, that is about noon, the action became more desultory, until De Grasse succeeded in drawing off his ships to windward. In this he was so successful that they were all out of the reach of shot at about half-past one, *p. m.*

Captain Bayne, of the Alfred, lost his life in this his sixth encounter with the same enemy.

The French, from holding a better wind than the ships of his Majesty, soon rejoined their convoy, which was a long way to windward.

Thus it is perceptible to every experienced seaman, that Sir George Rodney did every thing that skill, intrepidity, and zeal could effect, to bring on a general battle with the fleet of France, and that the want of wind in the early part of the morning alone prevented him from accomplishing his object.

Some of the ships in Sir Samuel Hood's division were much injured in their masts and rigging, and many of the French ships were not more fortunate, as three of them were subsequently compelled to put into port, of which notice will be taken in its proper place.

The above engagement is but slightly touched upon either by Mr. Clerk, or Rear Admiral Ekins, neither of whom appears to have had a clear conception of the mode of attack adopted by De Grasse on that occasion. Mr. Clerk, on what authority he does not state, asserts that the action in question did not continue more than an hour, when it is well known that it commenced at about half-past nine, and that the firing did not entirely cease until half-past one.

Rear Admiral Ekins, in his account of it, says that "Plate 18, fig. 1, given in his work, *describes* the situation of the two fleets on the 9th, *wherein it would seem that some advantage might have been taken by the rear of the British fleet, had it hauled close to the wind.*"

Rear Admiral Francis Samuel Drake never failed to keep close to the wind whenever an enemy was to windward of him. That part of Sir George Rodney's public letter which the author of "Naval Battles" has omitted, will fully exonerate that gallant officer from any thing like censure on that day.

"Their Lordships may easily imagine the mortification it must have been to the *sixteen gallant officers* commanding the ships of the rear, who could only be spectators of an action in which *it was not in their power to join, being detained by the calms under Dominique.*"*

By inspecting the plates now given of this action, it will be seen that the rear division, as well as the centre, did keep close to the wind, as soon as they had a light air to enable them to do so; and that every thing was done both by Sir George Rodney and Rear Admiral Drake, on that day, to support the van division, whenever a breeze of wind permitted them to put their ships in motion.

But De Grasse having penetrated Admiral Rodney's intention of separating his fleet, directed his ships to keep their wind, and to discontinue the action, when they put about, after having passed the British van. Consequently, these ships when they had tacked to the southward, fetched so far to windward of the Formidable, as to be scarcely within reach of shot from Sir George Rodney's division in crossing it;—and it was only those ships of the enemy which were still on the starboard tack, that Sir George Rodney could at all bring to action.

* See Clerk's Tactics, p. 243. Extract from Sir G. Rodney's letter.

Cooper Sc

Stonehouse

ISLE of DOMINICA
Cape de Capucin
PRINCE RUPERT'S BAY
B
B
A
E
E
A
A
E
E
R
POSITION
at Noon.
9th April.

From what has been said, the reader cannot, I should think, arrive at any other conclusion than this—that no advantage was offered in that day's battle, to either the centre or rear division of the British fleet, that they did not avail themselves of to the utmost of their power; and it is beyond a question that Sir George Rodney, had his wily enemy given him the opportunity, would have cut in between the ships engaged with Sir Samuel Hood's division, and the rest of the French fleet, which but for his approach would have continued to make the circular attack on the British van division.

It is too frequently the case in the accounts given of naval transactions which are compiled by landsmen, and perhaps naval authors themselves are not altogether exempt from the defect, that sufficient allowance is not made for the difference existing between different ships of the same class, and consequently one ship is considered by their readers as good as another. This relative difference between the ships composing the fleets of France and England seems to have been completely overlooked in all the narratives which have reached us of the events in question, although a due consideration of it is so necessary to a correct view of the movements of the respective fleets. The French naval architecture had attained a degree of excellence in the construction and capacity of the ships of that nation, which gave them serious advantages over us in point of sailing, either on a wind, or going large; and from their having a greater depth of hold, they possessed a decided superiority in the most essential point of keeping a better wind. The fineness of their construction gave them important facilities in smooth water; hence in a fine weather climate, where nautical skill is not so frequently required as under our inconstant sky, and on our more boisterous ocean, they could at all times either commence or avoid close action at pleasure; hence also the facility with which they got away to windward of our fleets when they no

longer wished to engage; and most likely had it not been for the accidents which happened to some of their ships, in consequence of the battle of the ninth, Sir George Rodney might not have been able to overtake the fleet of the enemy, even had both been equally in possession of the breeze.

In order to illustrate the above reasoning, the comparative dimensions of two classes of ships in the two fleets are given below.

FRENCH AND BRITISH SECOND RATES.

SHIP	GUNS	LENGTH ft. in.	BREADTH ft. in.	DEPTH ft. in.	TONS
Ville de Paris	102	185 $7\frac{1}{2}$	53 $8\frac{1}{2}$	22 2	2347
Formidable	98	177 $6\frac{3}{4}$	50 5	21 0	1845

FRENCH AND BRITISH THIRD RATES.

SHIP	GUNS	LENGTH ft. in.	BREADTH ft. in.	DEPTH ft. in.	TONS
Le Northumberland	74	178 0	48 $2\frac{1}{2}$	21 2	1801
Bedford*	74	168 6	46 9	20 0	1606

That evening and the next day were principally occupied in refitting the disabled ships. Sir George Rodney also inverted the line from van to rear, the latter having had no share in the action of the ninth, as above accounted for.

The chase of the enemy was then resumed with vigour, though there was no very great prospect of again succeeding in bringing them to battle from the uniform superiority of their fleet over ours in point of sailing. As a proof of the bad sailing of many of our ships, the Royal Oak was able to preserve her station in the rear, notwithstanding she could not carry sail on her main-mast (its head being shot away) save her main-sail.†

* Some of that class were only 1565 tons.

† In an action during the late war, one of our finest ships was considered to have been put *hors de combat*, from a similar occurrence, notwithstanding the weather was very moderate.

On the 11th, two of the enemy's ships appeared to be disabled, and to leeward of their own fleet. Sir George Rodney accordingly made the signal for a general chase to windward.* This brought down De Grasse for their protection, but as soon as he perceived that the retreat of his two disabled ships† into Basse-terre, (Guadaloupe) was effected, he again hauled his wind. This reduced the French fleet to thirty-two sail of the line.

During the night, whether from getting foul of some other ship, or from the injury she had sustained in the previous action, the Zèlé, a French ship of 74 guns, lost her fore-mast and bowsprit. This circumstance of course impeded the progress of their fleet, and was the immediate cause of the action that ensued.

The morning of the 12th presented to our view the above-mentioned French ship Le Zèlé, with her fore-mast and bowsprit gone, and towed by a frigate, both carrying all the sail they could to reach Basse-terre, (Guadaloupe.) Sir Samuel Hood from being in the rear, and consequently the nearest to these ships‡ was directed to send from his division some ships in chase of them. This task devolved on the Monarch, Valiant, Centaur and Belliqueux.¶

Before I proceed to narrate the proceedings which were occasioned by the above circumstance, I shall inform the reader of the actual situation of the two fleets, when the Zèlé was first discovered.

The British fleet had tacked at midnight and stood to

* Here the young midshipman's log, descriptive of the action, and published in Naval Battles, page 142, commences.

† Le Caton and Le Jason afterwards taken in the Mona passage.

‡ Had the fleet been on the starboard tack at day-light, as represented in some late publications, Sir Samuel Hood's division would have been the farthest off from these ships.

¶ In the young midsdipman's log, it is stated that two only were sent at half-past five in chase, and were recalled at three quarters past five, allowing them only a quarter of an hour to make the attempt of catching these ships. They were not recalled until a quarter past seven.

the northward until, I believe, four *a. m.*, when it again tacked and stood to the southward, *in which direction it was standing at day-light,* with *the larboard tacks on board,* sailing in three divisions, Admiral Drake's in the van, Sir George Rodney's in the centre, and Sir Samuel Hood's bringing up the rear. The Saints bore about N. N. E., and the north end of Dominica, East, distant about five leagues.

The French fleet at day-light bore N. E. (*i. e.* to windward), and about three leagues distant, having the larboard tacks on board, and under easy sail, to wait the issue of the Zèlé's attempt to reach Basse-terre. But the moment De Grasse perceived that four ships were sent in chase of her, he bore up with his whole fleet, doubtless to induce their recall, in which however he was deceived; for Sir George Rodney, instead of recalling these ships, made the signal at six o'clock for the fleet to form into line, to TACK,* and for Rear Admiral Drake's division to lead.

When the Comte de Grasse perceived the British fleet to be in the act of tacking (headmost ships first, and the rest in succession), and of forming into line a-head upon the starboard tack, by which change of position it would fetch the body of his fleet, and thereby bring on an action which it was his duty to endeavour to avoid, having more important objects in view, he very judiciously caused his fleet to haul to the wind on the larboard tack, or that on which it had been sailing, previous to its having bore up at day-light to cover the Zèlé.

* In a recent publication, it is stated, from a journal written at the time, that "at six o'clock Sir Charles Douglas went into LORD Rodney's cabin, *who was then in bed,* and told him that *Providence had given the French fleet under his lee-bow,* on which the Admiral got up." From this journal it would appear that the previous occurrences of the morning had taken place without the Admiral being apprized of them, which is not very usual, and directly contrary to the instructions issued to captains of the fleet, who are not to make any important signals without directions from the Admiral to do so. Besides the French fleet at six o'clock were on the Formidable's weather quarter, and not "*under her lee bow.*" See plate No. 1 of this action.

This measure he was compelled to adopt, as the islands called the Saints would have obstructed his line of march had he hauled to the wind on the starboard tack: moreover, could he have done the latter, his fleet would have been thrown into a bow and quarter line, which is not well calculated for retreat. Besides if the wind had not come from the southward, as it did very unexpectedly, it is more than probable that he would have escaped, after experiencing only a brush between his own rear and th British van.

At about seven o'clock, the Formidable, Sir George Rodney's ship, put about, and took her station a-stern of the Duke, then on the starboard tack. If the Formidable was on the larboard tack until seven, how could the French fleet have been seen under her *lee-bow* at six o'clock ?*

The four chasing ships were then recalled. This the copy from the Anson's log states to have taken place an hour and a half before this time, or in a quarter of an hour after they were ordered out in chase of Le Zèlé.

At half-past seven the Marlborough opened her fire on the ninth or tenth ship from the enemy's van. As she got near, she edged away and ran along to leeward of their line, no signal having been made by the Admiral for her acting otherwise.†

It was not until near nine o'clock, that the whole fleet was formed on the starboard tack, there being but little wind. About the same time, the whole of the centre division was in action, as was that part of Sir Samuel Hood's which was nearest to the centre.

At half-past nine the whole of the fleet, from van to rear, was engaged, in consequence of the change of wind having

* It is so stated to have been in a recent publication, before alluded to.

† If Mr. Clerk's Attack from the Leeward had been *finished* and *ready for the press* when he published his Attack from the Windward in January that year, the Marlborough probably would have been ordered to cut through the enemy's line. Was there such a signal?

driven the French van down upon our rear.* At nearly the same period, the Marlborough had passed the sternmost ship in the French line, and as soon as Rear Admiral Drake had done the same, he made the signal to his division to tack, which signal, however, was shortly after superseded by that for it to ware. Both signals are recorded in the copy of the Anson's log published in "Naval Battles," but no cause is assigned either by the writer of that log, or the gallant author, to account for the above change of signal.

At about ten o'clock, the southerly wind having reached the centre division, and the Duke having hauled more up in consequence thereof, it was observed from on board her, through the dense smoke which then enveloped all that part of the fleet, that a ship was right a-head of, and apparently standing towards her: as they approached each other nearer, she proved to be an enemy's ship which had been compelled to break off, from the change of wind, as stated above. Each ship put her helm a-weather to endeavour to go to leeward of the other, in which effort the Duke at length succeeded. This of course caused a greater opening in the French line, (if the straggling and irregular position of the French ships at that moment can be called a line) between the ship attempting to clear the Duke, and the Glorieux, her second a-head, which from the same cause found herself on the starboard bow of the Formidable. Sir George Rodney being thus situated, it was generally understood that he had no choice left him but to go through the opening in the French fleet, or become entangled, as the Duke was at that moment with the French ship above alluded to.

Beatson, who compiled and published his memoirs as soon after the events took place as he could, says on this subject:

* The French van very early in the morning began to break off in consequence of the wind heading it.

"About ten o'clock, the van of the French fleet, and part of the centre, and the whole of the rear of the British, had little wind from the southward, which forced that part of the French fleet to alter its course; and which, by obliging the van to steer to the westward, whilst the rear continued its course to the southward, completely deranged the French line of battle, and formed the opening in which *Admiral Rodney* FOUND *his ship*, and *some part of his division*, when the firing ceased and the smoke cleared away.

"The ships of the British centre, by changing their course with the alteration of the wind during the battle, steered to the eastward instead of the northward, as the fleet had been originally steering. This occasioned the British line, by the parts steering different courses, to be also completely broken. The rear of the French fleet, consisting of about thirteen ships, was between the British van, which was composed of about seventeen ships, and Admiral Rodney with six of the centre division; these six ships, had also Admiral De Grasse with five ships* on the other side of them, and he was completely divided from the rest of his own ships, by Sir Samuel Hood's division, then engaged with the van of the French fleet. Thus were the two fleets, *by change of wind alone*, and by *no other cause*, completely deranged; *each of them* divided into *three different parts*,† which were *entirely separated*, by some ships of the opposing fleet intervening.

"Admiral Rodney in his own ship, *by changing his course with the change of wind, was separated from his second a-head.*‡ Whether this change of the course of

* De Grasse had five ships with him, independent of the Ville de Paris.

† Had Mr. Clerk or Rear Admiral Ekins read Beatson's account of this battle, they surely would not have asserted that, in consequence of the Formidable going through the French line, it was cut in "*twain.*" Yet on this erroneous basis these writers have reared what I can scarcely call their respective theories—the theory of the one being little more than a transcript of the other.

‡ The Duke.

Admiral Rodney's ship happened from inadvertence in the heat of the battle, or from *design, does not clearly appear.* It took place about ten o'clock, and *was probably* UNKNOWN *to the Admiral himself.*

"The whole success of the battle on the 12th of April, has been sometimes attributed to this measure. The British Admiral has also been *supposed to break through a connected line of the enemy's ships.* These representations, however, appear to proceed from mistake, for the French line was completely deranged by the change of wind alone; and *so far was the measure of sailing through the enemy's line with six ships,* unconnected with the rest of the fleet, *from being decisive of victory, that* IT MAY BE DOUBTED WHETHER IT WAS A FORTUNATE EVOLUTION." And, "whilst the ships of both fleets were in the disorder which has been mentioned, owing to the change of wind, *they were so little under the directions of the Commander-in Chief, that many of the Captains must have been guided entirely by their own judgment in the measures they were to pursue.*"

In the memoirs above referred to, not the slightest mention is made of any difference of opinion having taken place between the Commander-in-Chief, and his Captain of the Fleet, respecting the Formidable having broken the continuity of her own line, by passing through that of the enemy, on the morning of the 12th of April; nor was I aware of the alleged altercation, until I met with an account of it in the work entitled "Naval Battles." From Sir Charles Douglas's well known suavity of manners, and uniform correctness of conduct, nothing but the strongest evidence should convince me of the fact; and how he could have used the language ascribed to him, in the very teeth of the 11th and 22nd articles of war, is astonishing.

From a regard to his memory, I am induced to hope that there must have been some misconception of the words

which may have taken place between the Admiral and the Captain of the Fleet, on that memorable occasion. Very happily for the maintainance of discipline, the ill-judged discussion was prudently confined to the ship of the Commander-in-Chief; at all events it did not obtain currency on board the ship of the second in command; or if it did, it never reached my ears, although I was frequently in attendance, in time of battle, and on other public occasions, on that gallant and highly distinguished officer Lord Hood, and had the honor of being admitted to his table at least once, and often twice in the week; where, had the subject been introduced, I could not have well failed to have heard it. Nor was it ever mentioned in my hearing, in the cockpit of the second in command, the usual emporium of all the *news* in the fleet; while I perfectly remember to whom was attributed the advice said to have been given to the Commander-in-Chief, to cease to pursue the enemy at sun-set, as well as the precise words, in which the advice was said tobe conveyed; but respect for the worthy dead seals my lips, and restrains my pen, when truth and justice do not demand disclosure.

At about the same time the Formidable went through the French line, between ~~the Glorieux~~ * and her second a-stern†; the *Bedford also passed through it, between the third* and *fourth ship a-head of De Grasse,* but it does not

L'Eveil

* It has been asserted that the Glorieux was then "shorn of all her masts, bowsprit, and ensign staff." If that were the case, how did she contrive to follow in train of her Admiral? or why was she not followed and taken possession of at ten, instead of being left in the hands of the enemy until one o'clock on the afternoon of that day? Captain Inglis makes no mention of any such circumstance in a conversation recorded by Clerk, and the young midshipman in his log quoted in "Naval Battles," says that "at noon, when the smoke cleared away, we saw the Glorieux dismasted." Now as he appears to have seen all the transactions which took place in the centre of our fleet, in spite of the smoke that then enveloped it, he of course would likewise have observed the circumstance of the Glorieux losing her masts, had it then happened at ten o'clock, when he saw the Formidable go through the French line, and perceived the French Diadem to go down, &c.

† Le Sceptre

appear that Commodore Affleck was at all aware of having done so, until he got clear of the smoke, by having passed the stern-most ship of the French van.

In consequence of the above fortuitous circumstances, both fleets were alike broken into three unequal portions, instead of being cut in *twain,* as is asserted by Mr. Clerk, and re-echoed by the author of "Naval Battles."

Had these writers consulted the judicious Beatson, or the little work given to the world by the late Captain Matthews, they would have avoided the errors into which they have fallen respecting this battle.

The wind from still heading more and more the French van, brought them into closer contact with Sir Samuel Hood's division than would otherwise have been the case. Owing to this, and the light air of wind gradually subsiding, these portions of the two fleets continued to be closely engaged until twelve o'clock, and a few of the stern-most ships in either division maintained the conflict until near one.

As soon as the stern-most ship in the French rear or northern division had passed round the stern of the Duke,* which was then the last ship in the van, or northern division of the British fleet, the firing of course must have ceased in that part of the field of battle. When the smoke from those ships cleared away (which must have occurred somewhere about half-past eleven), Sir George Rodney doubtless discovered that that portion of the enemy's fleet had slipped through his fingers, in consequence of the separation which had unfortunately taken place in *his own Fleet.* He therefore, as soon as he rejoined his van, wore round in pursuit.

The six ships that were with De Grasse, had silently

*The Duke was a-head, and not a-stern of the Formidable. In the line of battle given out she was so placed, but it should be remembered, that the line was inverted on the 10th.

made their way through the spacious opening offered them between the Ajax and Bedford, which was occasioned by the change of wind before alluded to, and effected their escape nearly about the same time, between the division of Sir George Rodney and Sir Samuel Hood, but unperceived by either of those officers.

At about twelve o'clock, in consequence of the above occurrences, the firing had nearly ceased, with the exception of two or three of our rear ships that were still engaged with two or three of the stern-most ships of the Comte de Vaudreuil's division, then endeavouring to pass them with a very light air of wind.

The smoke now clearing more away, a ship of the line was discovered to the northward from the Barfleur, without a mast standing. She was soon recognized to be an enemy, and to be in tow of a Frigate. When the smoke had nearly dispersed, the British centre and van divisions were seen from the same ship on the other side of, and directing their course towards the disabled ship of the enemy, having a light air from the E.S.E. Sir Samuel Hood's division was becalmed, with the exception of the Bedford, (united with it from the change of wind) and another ship near her, which, as well as the advanced ships of the opposite divisions, were striving to seize upon this first manifestation of victory. The Canada, one of the centre division, from her superior sailing, succeeded in coming up with her. She proved to be the Glorieux, and must have lost her masts in consequence of the tremendous cannonade she sustained, while passing the Formidable and the five ships a-stern of her.* Her flag had been subsequently nailed to the stump of her main-mast, by order of her late Captain previous to his death.

* See Captain Inglis's account of the destructive fire poured into this ship by the Canada, when they passed each other in opposite directions at 10 A.M. as given by Clerk, in page 251.

It is most probable that this must have been the period, when the Captain of the Fleet exclaimed: "behold, Sir George, the Greeks and Trojans* contending for the body of Patroclus." This is in perfect accordance with the usual style of expression used by Sir Charles Douglas, while the answer to it is not only agreeable to that of Sir George Rodney, but the anxiety marked in it conveys the idea of the emotions which were then passing in the speaker's mind: for until the smoke was completely dispersed (which it was not when the Glorieux was first seen), and the actual state of the French fleet discovered, the propriety of the measure of having gone through the French line could not but have been extremely doubtful. No wonder then that his answer to so florid a speech, at such a time, should have been, "damn the Greeks, and damn the Trojans; I have other things to think of:" but soon after perceiving, possibly for the first time, the shattered and confused condition of the enemy's fleet, and that his own rear were in a fit state to renew the combat, we cannot be surprised at his turning towards the Captain of the Fleet, and making the *amende honorable* for his previous rudeness of expression, in these words, "now my dear friend, I am at the service of your Greeks and Trojans, and the whole of Homer's Iliad, or as much of it as you please, for the enemy is in confusion, and our victory is secure."‡

At this time the French ships were endeavouring to make the best of their way to the westward, with all the tattered canvas they could spread to a light air, which just enabled them to keep their heads in that direction.

The moment the Canada compelled the Glorieux to strike her colours, she proceeded after another enemy with

* The *Greeks* I presume were the advanced ships of Sir George Rodney's division, the Trojans of Sir Samuel Hood's; each were striving to seize upon this unfortunate hulk, from the opposite sides of the field of battle.

‡ The man must be insane, who could fancy for a moment that breaking *both lines* could be considered as decisive of victory.

all the speed the lightness of the air would admit of, and left her prize to be taken possession of by one of the disabled ships. The Admiral made the Royal Oak's signal to perform this piece ef service.

At about one o'clock, a breeze sprung up, when every ship endeavoured to fulfil, to the letter, the signal to chase made by the Admiral; who also made a signal for close action.

Shortly after this, the separated centre and rear divisions of the French fleet formed a junction with each other, and steered S.W. to re-unite themselves with their van division, which steered so as to meet them. At about two o'clock, all the three disjointed divisions of their fleet were again united, and steered first a westerly, and then a W.N.W. course, having only lost one of their number, owing to her being totally dismasted.

It has been asserted that De Grasse attempted to re-form his fleet into line of battle, and face, a second time, his more fortunate enemy, but that he could not get his captains to second his views by complying with his signals for that purpose.

Any one who saw the mutilated state of a very great majority of that fleet, could not but have concluded that they were incapable of complying with these orders, if indeed they were issued, as such sails as they could set were perfectly riddled with shot.

At a little after three, the Centaur came up with, and began to engage, the Cèsar, one of Vaudreuil's division, after a chase of an hour and a half at least, if not of two hours. The Cèsar had no sail left but a fore-top sail full of shot-holes; her main-yard was half hanging over her side; her main-top-sail-yard was in the top with the top-sail hanging in tatters over the top rim, and the sheets shot away; the top-gallant-sail flying away in ribbands, and not an entire sail, if any, on her mizen-mast; yet she maintained the conflict until the Centaur laid her

on-board, and carried her by boarding. Notwithstanding this ship was in so disabled a state, the Centaur was compelled to set lower, top-mast, and top-gallant studding-sails, and royals, to overtake her, and when along-side of her, did not dare to take in a single sail—nay, even engaged with the lower studding-sail set on the side not engaged, lest her opponent should escape her. When Captain Inglefield ran her a-board, he was enabled to shorten sail, in consequence of their anchors hooking each other. The crews of both then exchanged ships; that of the Centaur poured in upon the deck of her adversary, while that of the Cèsar crept into the Centaur's lower deck ports, apprehensive of their own ship going to the bottom.* The Cèsar, in the course of the evening, caught fire, in consequence of some of her remaining crew having broken open the spirit-room, where they became intoxicated. The first Lieutenant of the Centaur had the charge of the prize, and, with a determination worthy of a Granville, never left the stern-walk, after all hope of extinguishing the fire was over,† where he, with many more unfortunate men of both crews, were drowned, or perished in the flames.

At about four o'clock, the Canada came up with L'Hector, and, after an action of twenty minutes, compelled her to strike. The gallant Cornwallis consigned to her the care of the Alcide, whose signal was made to take possession of her. This ship was nearly the most entire of the whole of the enemy's fleet. Probably her being captured was owing to the quantity of stores that had been embarked on board her.

The Canada then pushed on for the Ville de Paris, on whose stern and quarters she at intervals kept up a most

* The boatswain of the Cêsar had been one of the crew, if not boatswain, of the Centaur when captured from the French in 1759. His old ship was recognized by him when coming up a-stern.

† The writer regrets that he should not recollect the name of this gallant man.

destructive fire, until the arrival of the Barfleur, Sir Samuel Hood's ship.

From one o'clock, when the breeze sprung up, the whole fleet were in chase of the flying enemy. This, it must be admitted, is contradicted in the extraordinary statement advanced in the copy of the Anson's Log published in "Naval Battles," which is as follows: "At five minutes past four, the Admiral made the signal to ware; do. wore ship, and bore up for the enemy."

Probably the writer, in the hurry not unusual among midshipmen when so occupied, forgot what he had recorded just before, wherein he states,—"At twenty-five minutes past one, our fleet closed with the enemy, every ship engaging as *they* could come up with them; they still carried all the sail they could. At fifty minntes past one, the signal for a closer action was again repeated; *several of our weather-most ships renewed the action with the enemy's rear.*"*

At five o'clock, the Belliqueux came up with the Ardent, (taken from us in 1779) each mounting 64 guns. After an engagement of about fifteen minutes, the latter struck to the former, and immediately after hoisted a red ensign, which, it was afterwards understood, was done by some English prisoners, who were delighted to be thus liberated from the jaws of a French prison.

At this time the Barfleur was in chase of the Triomphant, as Sir Samuel Hood was desirous of leaving the Ville de Paris to grace the triumph of his chief, who in the Formidable was some distance a-stern of, but using every effort to come up with her.

In a French work, read many years ago by the writer, it was stated that the Comte de Grasse proposed to his

* The writer, until he met with the above public record, through ignorance possibly, always conceived that, at the above period, ("fifty minutes after one") the whole of the French fleet was to *leeward* of the British. By this account, it would appear that we had the enemy on both sides of us.

officers to blow up the ship when every chance of escape was despaired of; to which they not assenting, he decided on striking his flag to his old antagonist then passing him on his larboard beam, just out of reach of shot. The Canada's annoying attacks on the stern and quarters of the Ville de Paris, no doubt greatly contributed to produce this determination. The Ville de Paris accordingly hauled to port, and fired a shot of defiance, from one of her lower deck guns, at the Barfleur, which ship on her part hauled to starboard, in token of assent to the challenge thus openly proclaimed. The two ships approached each other about six o'clock, and when they had mutually got within musket shot, a most tremendous conflict ensued.*

The Canada then desisted from firing into the Ville de Paris, and passed on a-head in search of another foe. At least this was the impression on the writer's mind at the time, which he still believes to be correct, from the conviction that Cornwallis was too high-minded a man to engage any one when opposed to an equal antagonist.

At about twenty minutes after six, Sir Samuel Hood gave directions to run across the bows of the Ville de Paris, in order to rake her. These orders were instantly complied with; for *no subordinate officer*, however *high his rank*, would *have dared to dispute his orders*, or even *to delay their execution for an instant, with impunity;* but just as they were about to be put into execution, De Grasse, perceiving his opponent's intention, and finding that almost all around him were either killed or wounded, ordered his white flag at the main to be hauled down, in token of submission to his more fortunate enemy, whom he esteemed and admired. Both ships then hove to, that the

* The Young Midshipman's Log, inserted in "Naval Battles," states, "that at five minutes past five, the Ville de Paris kept up a heavy fire on both sides together." At that time, the Canada was the only ship firing at her, but as the Anson must have been some away a-stern, it might have so appeared on-board that ship. This shews how dangerous it is to describe battles from the log of any individual ship.

first Lieutenant of the Barfleur (Richard Deacon), might take possession of the prize. The Formidable, Sir George Rodney, had by that time got up so close, that he immediately sent Captain Lord Cranstoun on board with a message (no doubt of condolence) to the brave but vanquished Admiral. Candour and equity would be at a loss to decide which of the two officers first reached the Ville de Paris; perhaps Lord Cranstoun, being the younger and more active man, might have been first on her quarter-deck. The moment the Barfleur's jolly-boat returned from that ship, Sir Samuel Hood was about to crowd sail after the other French Admiral, whom he had given up the chase of to attack the French Chief, when the night signal to bring to was made by the Admiral.

With respect to the propriety, or impropriety of the measure of having brought the fleet to, young as I then was, it would ill become me to hazard an opinion; nor should any one undertake to do so who is not in full possession of all the various reasons and complicated circumstances, which, on the spur of the moment, influenced Sir George Rodney's decision.

In the copy of the Anson's log, quoted in the work entitled "Naval Battles Critically Reviewed and Illustrated," mention is made of the following circumstance, which may contribute to throw some light on the propriety of discontinuing tho pursuit of the French fleet, after the capture of the French Admiral at sun-set. After enumerating the ships that followed the French fleet all night, in consequence of their not having perceived the signal made by Sir George Rodney for the fleet to bring to, it says, "At six *a. m.* saw our fleet *from the mast-head* bearing E.N.E. but no sight of the French fleet."

Is not this a complete answer to the "Veteran Officer's" remark, given in that work, "that it was as easy to have taken fifteen as five sail of the line?"

Did the "Veteran Officer" take an enemy in the ship he commanded? or did he mean by his observation that had the British line remained entire during the morning engagement, fifteen of the enemy's ships would have been taken? If that were the ground work of his insinuation, the writer most cordially assents to its correctness—but yet he cannot but think that it would have been more seemly, had his remark been accompanied with some proof of its justice. But it is more than probable that the gallant Veteran never expected that it would have survived himself, or doubtless he would have been more cautious in giving an opinion on so weighty a matter, as the honor and professional character of such a man as Lord Rodney, without assigning at the same time his reasons for advancing it.

In the before quoted work, we also meet with the following observation, on which I shall beg leave to offer a few remarks. "On this day, nothing could be better conducted, whether by *accident* or design, than the cutting the line in twain by the centre of the British fleet, as shown in plate 18. fig. 2. but let it be observed, that the enemy, by proceeding as recommended in the figure, had it in his power *to retaliate with great effect;*" in other words, that the measure was a good one, because the French Admiral was not a sufficiently good tactician to take advantage of it, and by a counter manœuvre, prove it to have been a bad one. Admitting for the sake of argument, that the two fleets were only cut in twain, as asserted by that author, instead of being broken into three several parts, as they actually were, yet I cannot perceive how the proposed measure of retaliation could have proved disastrous to the British rear, as fancied by the gallant illustrator in question. Was not the French van (according at least to the plan of the battle given by him) moving in the same direction, and with equal velocity as their rear? If so, how could they present a double front to the thus

assailed British rear? It was impossible, unless the French van had brought to, which was not within the compass of the author's suggestion. What were the British van to be about?

In page 149, the same author is equally unfortunate in his proposed mode of attack by the headmost ships of the French rear, unless he meant to have it understood that the British were laying to for the express purpose of giving the French third in command an opportunity of displaying his tactics for the edification of Sir Samuel Hood and his experienced division. Had the gallant writer been better acquainted with the whole of the occurrences, as well as circumstances of that day, he would have known that the French van had not sufficient wind to attempt such a measure, and that their ships were not in a state to effect it —nor, I should think, had they the slightest wish to try so hazardous an experiment.

That Mr. Clerk should have broached nearly similar opinions, no one can be astonished, he having been accustomed to draw his very manageable ships from his pocket, in order to display their evolutions on the first table he met with. Having thus the movements of both fleets at his own disposal (to say nothing of that enthusiam that generally characterizes a projector,) it is no wonder that he should have overlooked the want of, or opposition from, winds, which frequently occurs to embarrass the actual movements of fleets on the ocean. Besides, can any one suppose for a moment that sixty-seven ships of the line can maintain a combat of five hours' duration, without raising such a cloud of smoke as to render signals entirely useless? Yet too many accounts lately given of this action would lead the inexperienced reader to infer that each individual transaction was distinctly seen and heard from one end of the British line to the other. On board the ship in which I was serving at the time, so dense was the smoke, and so deafening was the incessant roar of

cannon, that often one could scarcely perceive the nearest ship, and it was with some difficulty that the necessary orders could be communicated.

In page 144 in the same work, is the following remark: "From this plain narrative, taken by the Master of the Anson, &c. it is seen that, *breaking the enemy's line occasioned confusion;* and *confusion led to defeat.*"

If breaking their line put the enemy into confusion, how could they, while in this confusion, "retaliate with great effect?

The same author, in his proposed mode of attack, after the Formidable passed through the French line at ten *a. m.* advances such an extraordinary mode of proceeding as to demand a moment's investigation.

While the British rear is closely engaged with the French van, he recommends that the former should leave off engaging the latter, and run down to attack the flying French van to leeward of it.

If Sir Samuel Hood had acted in such a manner, he would have run away from that portion of the enemy that were to windward that he might run down to engage that part of the French fleet that was to leeward of him. This would have been placing himself between two fires, unless the weather French division can be supposed to be pusillanimous enough to allow this operation to be put into practice without making the slightest effort to assist or support their Rear division, a supposition not very flattering to that brave and high spirited people.

That Mr. Clerk, who seldom stopped to consider whether a proposition were practicable or not, should have recommended the mode of proceeding which he did in plate 9. Part II. fig. 38, after the French line was broken at ten *a. m.* cannot excite much astonishment; but that a professional writer should have taken up the same ground, and recommended the same measure without waiting to enquire whether the proposed object of attack were visible,

or whether there was any wind to enable the fleet to carry it into effect, cannot but excite surprise; particularly when these two impediments did actually occur to prevent the adoption of the measure; a measure which the pusillanimity of an enemy alone could render availing.

Mr. Clerk, in describing the manner in which the French rear, under Monsieur de Bourgainville, effected their escape through the opening made in the British line, by the Formidable having gone through that of the French, says, "This division WAS NOT PURSUED."

Now if this division was not pursued, not a ship in it could have been taken. What result then did this mighty manœuvre of sailing through the French line produce? Nothing but to open a way by which thirteen ships of the enemy escaped.

Could the whole of that division have avoided capture if they had been obliged to pass the fiery ordeal of the eighteen ships a-stern of the Formidable, as they must have done had the British line remained entire? A boy who has been six months at sea would be competent to answer this question.

If the Formidable fired her larboard guns the moment *the great manœuvre was triumphantly carried into effect*, and continued to do so, as represented by Mr. Clerk, for hours, how did it happen that the Canada, one of the six ships that accompanied and was a-stern of Sir George Rodney, only made use of her starboard guns at the Glorieux, while supposed to be passing close to the head-most ships in the French rear division, then to leeward of her? And how did it happen that the Captain of the St. Albans, the ship next a-head of the Canada, had apparently neither any particular occupation, nor any smoke to prevent him giving his whole attention to the destructive fire poured by the Canada into the Glorieux, in passing on her starboard side?*

* See Clerk's Tactics, note in page 251, in which Captain Inglis appears to have had nothing to do, "his ship having passed on a-head," *i. e.* out of the action.

According to Mr. Clerk, the Formidable, Namur, and Duke, remained stationary, that they might have the pleasure of raking the French rear ships as they bore up to run through the opening made for them; and when they had all passed through, instead of following them, Mr Clerk tells us Sir George Rodney tacked his division in succession, that he might go in chase, not of the French ships nearest to him, but of those that were two miles off, and which had effected their escape round the stern-most ship in the British rear.

Now if Sir George Rodney did tack his division, as above described by Mr. Clerk, it would have passed to the southward of Sir Samuel Hood's, and would have been discovered in that direction when the smoke cleared away at noon, instead of being seen to the northward, as it was at that period.

Mr. Clerk also places the Duke a-stern of the Namur, when she, in fact, had become the stern-most ship of the British separated van division. In fact Mr. Clerk appears to have been bewildered between his own pre-conceived opinions of this battle, and the imperfect accounts he obtained of it, which he in vain attempted to reconcile.

In another place, Mr. Clerk asserts that the French fleet was seen at day-light "*broad under their lee-bow, in some confusion,*" yet in a subsequent paragraph he states, that "at half-past seven *a. m.* the Marlborough, the leading ship of the van of the British, having *fetched* the fifth ship of the enemy's line, she was fired upon."

Did the Marlborough make a bend or sweep to leeward that she might avoid the fire of the four head-most ships in the French line, which she must have done if the French were broad upon her lee bow, when she set out upon her expedition?

Sir George Rodney is also made to commit, by the same writer, the egregious error of sending some of his southern-most ships in chase of a French disabled ship of the line,

seen to the northward. Were any one to credit Mr. Clerk's account of this battle, that person if he have common sense, and a common knowledge of seamanship, could not but conclude that Sir George Rodney must have taken leave of his senses.

Again, " So soon as the van division of the enemy had stretched past the rear of the British line, in bearing away, it broke into two divisions."

Mr. Clerk, or his informant, not having been aware of the fracture that was made in the French line a-head of de Grasse at 10 *a. m.* by the Bedford, was obliged to put his ingenuity to the stretch in order to account for the separation which was evident, when the smoke cleared away at noon, between the two French Admirals de Grasse and Vaudreuil. These he tells his readers *prepared* themselves to separate while partially engaged with Sir Samuel Hood's division. If that were the case how came de Grasse subsequently to take so much trouble to re-unite his *three* separated divisions?

He then places the Ville de Paris with the southern instead of the centre division of the French fleet, and makes that division steer S.S.W. notwithstanding that ship and her division, were to the northward and westward of the Barfleur, from one *p. m.* until sun-set.

In the next paragraph but one, Mr. Clerk makes the same semi-van or southern division steer to the northward. Had the Comte de Grasse acted so imprudently, many more ships of the enemy must inevitably have been taken.

Let us only reflect for a moment;—the British fleet are steering to the westward. A French division, among which is De Grasse, being to leeward or to the westward of them, is represented to be steering S. S.W. and then all at once as steering to the northward.* If that were the case, what were the British fleet about that they did not take the whole of these twelve or thirteen ships, which must have

* See Clerk's Tactics, page 253.

first stood away from them in one direction, and then have crossed them in a nearly opposite direction?

In order to make this clearer, let us put the following proposition.—

If a French squadron at F. bear N.W. from a British squadron at B. at the distance of three miles from each other; and if the squadron F. run three miles on a S.S.W. course, and then turn about and steer on a northerly course,† what distance will B. have to sail on a W.N.W. course,‡ for it to intercept the squadron F?

Answer, three miles and three quarters. So that while F. has been running in its flight five miles; B. by going only three miles and three quarters on a steady course, will intercept F. and bring it to close action.

Can any one suppose that if De Grasse had so conducted his fleet, twenty-six ships of the enemy could have effected their escape?

I shall conclude these observations with Lord Howe's opinion of Mr. Clerk's plan of attack, of breaking his own line that he may divide that of his enemy as given in the Edinburgh Review: "after studying the whole work, I think it very ingenious; but for my part, when I meet with an enemy, I am still resolved to fight him in the old way."

On the 1st of June, he did fight them in the old way, yet Mr. Clerk in his preface to the second edition of his work, published in 1804, says, after speaking of the effects produced by the publication of his fifty copies on the attack from the windward, "our affairs at sea soon took a different turn; and I have *since* had the satisfaction to see BY THE ADOPTION OF MY SYSTEM, a decided and permanent superiority given to our fleets!!!"

This no doubt will be considered as being very flattering to our brave and gallant Admirals, who by their skill, as

† These are courses that the French steered, according to Mr. Clerk.

‡ The course actually steered by Sir Samuel Hood's squadron division.

much as by their valour, raised the naval glory of our country to its highest possible pitch.

It has thus I trust been established, that in the engagement of the 9th of April, every thing was done by each of the three divisions of His Majesty's fleet that could be effected by valour, professional skill, and persevering effort to get into action; and that the supposed neglect imputed by a recent Historian* to the centre and rear divisions, was attributable solely to a want of wind, and not to any deficiency of energy or zeal, on the part either of Sir George Rodney or Rear Admiral Drake.

I have also, I trust, satisfactorily shewn that the battle of the 12th, was brought on by the French Admiral having borne up before the wind for the purpose of affording protection to the disabled French Ship Le Zèlé, and not by the British fleet having stood to the southward till two in the morning, as is most unaccountably stated in Sir George Rodney's public letter, and repeated by Mr. Clerk and Rear Admiral Ekins in their description of this engagement.

I have not allowed myself to be biassed by any consideration but facts, in bringing forward the statements I have ventured to lay before the public. On this principle also I have endeavoured to place in its due light, the so much vaunted measure of breaking the enemy's line. The boldest assertors of the claims of Mr. Clerk to the honour of this celebrated discovery, have not yet presumed to enumerate Commodore Affleck, of the Bedford, among his pupils, and yet it is true, that the Bedford, as well as the Formidable made her way between two of the enemy's ships, but in a different part, of what is called their line of battle. Owing to this circumstance the French fleet was, as has been already observed, broken into three parts instead of two as is commonly imagined, though we do not find that the gallant Affleck took any share of

* Naval Battles, page 141.

merit for achieving an exploit precisely similar to that which has been bruited with so much industry from John o' Groat's house to the Land's End. The victory of the 12th of April, however, was so far from arising from this movement either of the Formidable or the Bedford, that the circumstance of the disjointed parts of the British line getting between equal portions of the enemy's fleet, produced only the effect of allowing seventeen or eighteen sail, to avoid the cannonade they must have encountered in weathering the ships of the British rear, which they must have done had they had to pass our whole line. How far they would have succeeded in doing so is another question, but the strong probability is, that had they, in the state in which they then were, been exposed to this additional ordeal, they would have shared the fate of their five captured comrades. It seems evident then that we must ascribe the victory, under Providence, to the circumstance of the contending fleets being brought into close combat by Sir George Rodney tacking at the precise moment he did, and by a subsequent change of wind. This position gave to our brave countrymen an opportunity of exerting those qualities which are the result of firmer nerve and cooler courage, while it deprived their enemy of the advantage he was generally so fond of deriving from his superiority in sailing and consequently in manœuvring, of which he availed himself whenever he could fight at long shot distance.

I shall have been most unfortunately misunderstood, if in what has been asserted, it be imagined that there is the slightest intention to reflect on the memory of as brave a leader as ever took a fleet into action, because he did, either of his own will, or from the suggestions of others, or from circumstances over which he had no control, break the continuty of his own line, that he might sever that of the enemy, by which measure thirteen at least of the enemy's ships escaped, would otherwise have conferred

additional lustre on his triumph. I am only anxious that a point of such vital importance to my country as her naval superiority, should be established on impregnable grounds. The victory, under the circumstances in which, and at the time when the battle was fought, was a glorious and brilliant achievement, and far be it from me to strip a leaf from the green wreath which will encircle the Victor's fame in the annals of his country. His candid and ingenuous mind would have led him at once to acknowledge, that had not the opening been made in the British line, *which was occasioned principally by a change of wind,* the victory would have been more complete. It has been my object to give the young seaman an opportunity of duly appreciating this too much vaunted manœuvre—the breaking of both lines, — and to impress upon him that the victory is to be attributed to the judicious conduct of the British Admiral in taking prompt advantage of the circumstances with which Providence favoured him, and to the zealous energy he displayed from the commencement of the chase, to the final overthrow of the enemy.

LINE OF BATTLE.

No.	Ships.	Guns.	Captains.	Flag Officers.
1	Royal Oak,	74,	Burnett,	
2	Alfred,	74,	Bayne,	
3	Montague,	74,	Bowen,	
4	Yarmouth,	64,	Parry,	
5	Valiant,	74,	Goodall,	
6	Parfleur,	98,	Knight,	Sir Samuel Hood, Bt. Rear Admiral.
7	Monarch,	74,	Reynolds,	
8	Warior,	74,	Sir. J. Wallace, Bt.	
9	Belliqueux,	64,	Sutherland,	
10	Centaur,	74,	Inglefield,	
11	Magnificent,	74,	Linzee,	
12	Prince William,	64,	Wilkinson,	
13	Bedford,	74,	Graves,	Commodore Affleck.
14	Ajax,	74,	Carrington,	
15	Repulse,	64,	Dumaresque,	
16	Canada,	74,	Cornwallis,	
17	St. Albans,	64,	Inglis,	
18	Namur,	90,	Fanshawe,	
19	Formidable,	98,	Sir Charles Douglas, John Symons,	Sir G. B. Rodney, Bt. K. B. Admiral of the White, &c. &c. &c.
20	Duke,	98,	Gardner,	
21	Agamemnon,	64,	Caldwell,	
22	Resolution,	74,	Lord Robert Manners,	
23	Prothee,	64,	Bucknor,	
24	Hercules,	74,	Savage,	
25	America,	64,	Thompson,	
26	Russell,	74,	Saumarez	
27	Fame,	74,	Barbor,	
28	Anson,	64,	Blair,	
29	Torbay,	74,	Gedoin,	
30	Princessa	70,	Knatchbull,	Rear Admiral Drake,
31	Prince George,	98,	Williams,	
32	Conqueror,	74,	Balfour,	
33	Nonsuch,	64,	Truscott,	
34	Alcide,	74,	Thompson,	
35	Arrogant,	74,	Cornish	
36	Marlborough,	74,	Penny,	

N. B. In the action of the 12th, the line was inverted from van to rear; consequently the Marlborough led on that day, and the rest in succession. The numbers show the place of each ship in the accompanying Plates.

BYERS, PRINTER, DEVONPORT.

A SUPPLEMENT

TO THE

ACTION OF THE TWELFTH OF APRIL,

1782.

A SUPPLEMENT,

&c.

Since the foregoing sheets went to press, the writer has been enabled to look over the second edition of the work entitled "Naval Battles," in which it appears, that the author has added to the original account of this engagement, the opinions of a French writer, a Mons. Ramatuelle, upon it. This gentleman has very naturally endeavoured to discover causes to which he can attribute the loss of this battle by his countrymen, rather than to candidly acknowledge the prowess of the victors by which it was achieved. The passage alluded to is as follows.

"Of this battle it is observed by 'Ramatuelle,' that Lord Rodney attached considerable importance to the mode of attack—that of engaging upon *opposite tacks;* to this, to the favourable change of wind, and to his superiority of force, he ascribes his succes; which indeed he declares would have been followed by consequences the most disastrous, had he been skilful enough to have made the most of his victory; instead of which he says he shut himself up at Jamaica with all his fleet, permitting the French Admiral (Vaudreuil) to send two considerable convoys from St. Domingo, which arrived safe in France, under the protection of two ships of war, no longer able to keep the sea."*

*See "Naval Battles," 2nd Edit. p. 179.

In reply to the above it may be observed that Lord Rodney having attacked the enemy on *different tacks,* appears to have given offence to Mons. Ramatuelle, not because the measure was bad in itself, but because it led to the defeat of his countrymen.

Can any Englishman object to Lord Rodney for having taken advantage of a circumstance which brought his own fleet in close contact with that of his enemy?

With respect to the "superiority of force" supposed to be possessed by the British fleet, if any one will take the trouble to make the calculation, the result will possibly turn out in favour of the enemy, at least as far as respects the weight of shot thrown by the respective combatants taken collectively.

With respect to Lord Rodney not having "been skilful enough to make the most of his victory," it is only necessary to inquire whether Mons. Ramatuelle has shewn sufficient grounds whereon to found an allegation of so serious a nature as that which has been advanced by him —if not, it is unworthy of further notice, or of an attempt at refutation.

He then goes on to say that Lord Rodney "shut himself up"—*not in his cabin,* as one might be led to suppose from what has lately appeared in print—but "at Jamaica," &c. Be that as it may, he previously sent, that is three days after the action, or as soon as he had ascertained by his cruizers that not a single French man of war was to be seen in the ports of any one of the Windward Islands (improperly called the "Leeward Islands"), Sir Samuel Hood, with his division, to scour the south side of the Islands of Porto Rico and St. Domingo, and then to rejoin him off Cape Tiburoon. During this excursion Sir Samuel captured two French line of battle ships, a frigate, and a sloop of war; with these he rejoined his Commander in Chief at the appointed rendezvous. Lord Rodney took charge of his prizes, and again detached him

(Sir Samuel Hood) with twenty sail of the line, to cruize off Cape François, where he was to remain as long as his water and provisions would last, or for a specified time. It was thus that Lord Rodney "shut himself up at Jamaica with all his fleet."

With respect to the last charge, that of two crazy ships having escorted two convoys from St. Domingo to France —were Mons. Ramatuelle to examine the archives of the French Marine, the writer believes he would find, that they were escorted by ten if not twelve sail of the line, and under the charge of Monsieur Bougainville himself.

It is rather astonishing that this profound French writer should not have adverted to and given his opinion upon the grand manœuvre—the breaking of the French and British lines. Perhaps he could have informed us whether they were broken in "Twain," or into three seperate parts respectively.

Was Mons. Ramatuelle aware that Lord Rodney was in the act of proceeding to sea the moment his fleet, prizes, &c. were ready to accompany him, when, to the astonishment of himself and the whole fleet, he was superseded in his command; not for misconduct, but because a change of ministry had taken place at home?

Was Mons. Ramatuelle aware that the combined fleets of France and Spain in that country still amounted to forty ships of the line?

Will Mons. Ramatuelle, in the next edition of his work, favor the world with the actual dates of the periods when the two convoys left St. Domingo, of which he speaks, with so much apparent exultation, as having reached France in safety?

Might not some blame attach to the British Ministry, or to the Admiral commanding the British fleet at home, for not having stationed cruizers off the French Ports, for the purpose of intercepting these valuable convoys, rather than to Lord Rodney, who had conquered the enemies of

his King and Country, and who at that moment, perhaps, ceased to be in command?

Perhaps Monsieur Ramatuelle conceived that Lord Rodney retained the command of his Britannic Majesty's fleet in the West Indies until the conclusion of the war—in which case there might have been some grounds for the concluding remark in the extract taken from his work by the author of "Naval Battles."

The only conclusion that can be drawn from Mons. Ramatuelle's extracted paragraph is, that the French fleet was more dreadfully mauled than even the writer of these sheets had conceived or has attempted to describe, and that, to the French at least, this Battle was something more than "*Children's play.*"*

* See "Naval Battles," page 146 in the first, and 177 in the second Edition.

List of the French Fleet, commanded by the Comte de Grasse, Admiral of the White.

Ships.	*Guns.*	*Remarks, &c.*
La Ville de Paris	104,	Taken, but lost on her passage home.
Le Glorieux	74,	Taken, Do. Do.
L'Hector	74,	Taken, never reached England.
Le Cesar	74,	Taken, burnt by accident in the night.
L'Ardent	64,	Taken, but never reached England.
Le Caton	64,	Taken, } in the Mona passage.
Le Jason	64,	Do. }
Le Diadem	74,	No account of after the action.*

* This ship is included in the line of battle given out by De Grasse, just previous to his leaving Fort Royal Bay, a copy of which the writer was favoured with, through the kindness of John Barrow, Esq., one of the Secretaries at the Admiralty. If this ship was not sunk, what became of her, as she appears in no subsequent list given of Bougainville's fleet?

The following ships reached Cape Francois under Monsieur de Bougainville.

		Killed.	*Wounded.**	*Remarks.*
L'Auguste	84,	had 14	97	
Le Triomphant	84,	6	36	
La Couronne	84,	16	143	
Le duc de Burgogne	84,	7	214	
Le Lanquedoc	84,	53	210	This ship was one of de Grasse's seconds.
Le St. Esprit	80,	87	76	
Le Magnanime	74,	10	142	Was lost at Boston.
Le Neptune	74,	4	107	
Le Brave	74,	14	17	
Le Bien Aimé	74,	8	61	This ship was not included in de Grasse's List.
Le Bourgogne	74,	25	114	
Le Citoyen	74,	4	76	
Le Conquerant	74,	9	114	
Le Dauphin Royal	74,	1	89	
Le Palmier	74,	11	193	
Le Northumberland	74,	7	94	
Le Destin	74,	16	126	
Le Sceptre	74,	9	13	
Le Zèlé	74,	2	68	Lost her fore-mast on the night of the 11th.
Le Souverain	74,	16	176	
Le Scipion	74,	0	89	Afterwards run on shore by the Torbay and London.
Le Reflechi	64,	2	190	
Le Marseillois	74,			
L'Hercule	74,			Put into Curaçoa in a very shattered state. No returns of their killed and wounded.
Le Pluton	74,			
L'Eveille	64,			
Le Sagittaire	54,			Were with the convoy.
L'Experiment	50,			

Total, 35 of the line, two 50-gun ships, and 14 frigates.

In the action of the 12th, the French ships appear to have taken their stations as they could, or those of some of them must have been changed between the actions of the 9th and 12th. Generally speaking, the French van and those ships that were immediately a-head and a-stern of De Grasse appear to have suffered most; the former from having been upwards of two hours in close contact with Sir Samuel Hood's division the latter possibly from having been exposed to the irresistible fire of the

* The wounded were designated as being sick, but were doubtless the wounded—there being no other return given of them in the French Account published by Beatson.

Duke, Formidable, and Namur, which ships must have passed the French centre in slow time in consequence of the wind dying away just as they got to that part of their line, as well as from their having taken off the fiery edge of the British van, the whole of which must have passed them very close.

EXPLANATIONS OF THE PLATES TO THE ACTION OF THE TWELFTH.

PLATE FIRST.

B. The British fleet tacking in succession.
E. The four ships in chase.
C. British frigates.
Z. The Zele towed by a frigate.
F. The French fleet coming to the wind on the larboard tack.
f. French frigates. Wind E. N. E.

PLATE SECOND.

By a reference to the Line of Battle, the number against each ship will denote her name and station in the line.
The Van are blue. The Centre a red cross. The Rear all red.

PLATE THIRD.

The divisions are denoted as before.
A. The French Centre and Rear divisions, under De Grasse and Bougainville.
V. The French Van under Vaudreuil.
B. The British Centre and Van division having wore round after the enemy.
E. The British Rear becalmed.
D. The dismasted Glorieux towed by the Richmond frigate, and the object of pursuit to both portions of the British fleet; the whole nearly becalmed.

PLATE FOURTH.

B. B. British Centre and Van divisions.
E. British Rear division.
C. The Centaur taking possession of Le Cèsar.
I. Royal Oak taking possession of Le Glorieux.
7. Monarch taking in more powder.
A. A. The three French divisions forming a junction.
H. The Canada closing with L' Hector.

ERRATA.

Page 29,	*line* 20,	*for* enchellon,	*read* en-echelon.
30,	13,	Affleek,	*read* Affleck.
39,	20,	*after* French Admiral,	*read* arrived in.
41,	10,	*for* would,	*read* could.
46,	29,	tafrail,	*read* taffrail.
47,	13,	*after* to find,	*read* to find in.
81,	18,	larboard line,	omit the comma.
109,	3,	in note, *after* follow in,	*insert* the.
114,	25,	*for* to her.	*read* her to.
119,	7,	French rear,	*read* French van.

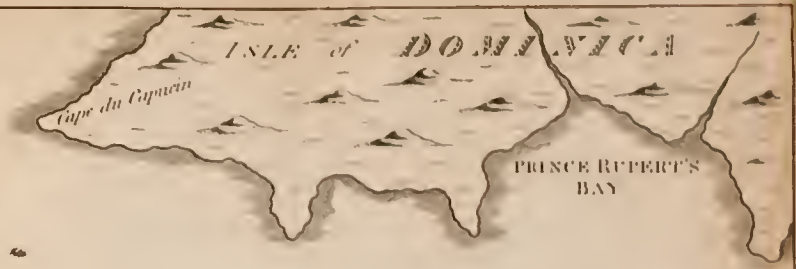
BYERS, PRINTER, DEVONPORT.

ISLE of
DOMINICA
PRINCE RUPERT'S
BAY
f
F
Isles des Saintes
b
B
B
b
a

PLATE 1st
12th April 1782
at 6 A.M.

DOMINICA
PRINCE RUPERT'S BAY
F
B
F
B
B
33
32
31
34
B
35
36

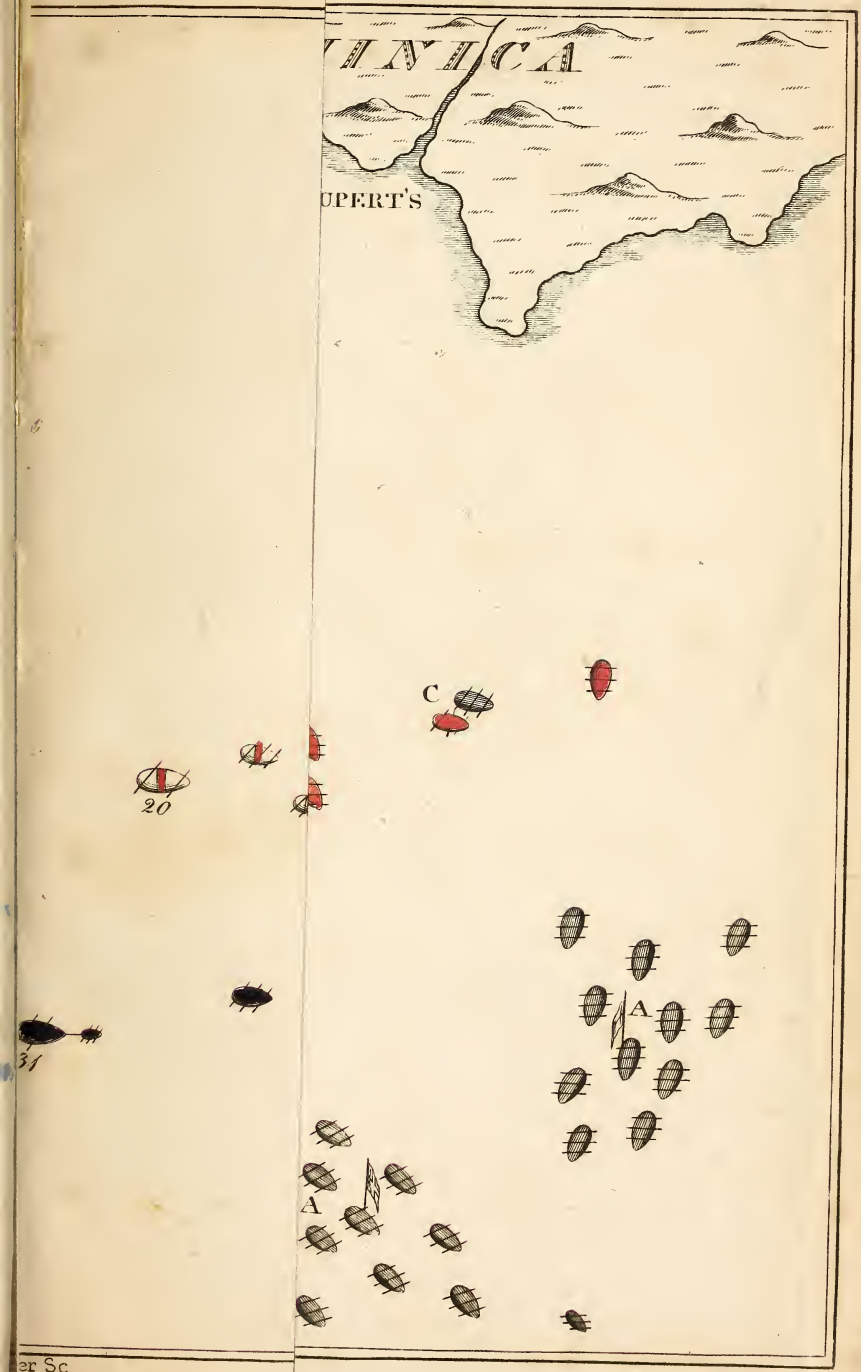
PLATE 2nd
12th of April
1782



Cooper Sc

Stonehouse

ISLE of DOMINICA
Cape du Capucin
PRINCE RUPERT'S BAY
PLATE 3rd
12th of April
at Noon
A
B
D
E
V


UPERT'S
C
20
A
A
31

ISLE of DOMINICA
Cape du Capucin
PRINCE RUPERT'S BAY
PLATE 4th
19th of April.
at 5 P.M
A
B
B
C
E
H
I
L
20

212415
2.c. 71.
a.

212415
S.C-71
a

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